

hold my hand, we'll be okay by ghostyface

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Summary:

"What's your name?"

"My name?" Billy hisses. "Fuck that, who the hell are *you?*"

The boy with a face that's way too pretty shrugs. Pops a maraschino cherry into his mouth. There's whipped cream smudged above his lip that makes Billy want to do *filthy* things.

"My name is Seven." He nudges his empty glass forward. "Can I have another strawberry milkshake?"

1. prologue: a boy named seven

Author's Note:

welcome to another Steve is a Number AU lol

warning for this chapter: there is a scene of pederasty, it is "consensual" but Steve is like 13 at the time so you know, he can't actually consent. it's not really supposed to be sexy, just establishes things, and it's the only one in the fic i promise

idk man maybe im going thru stuff ㄟ(ˉ_ˉ)ﾉ

edit: LMAO i forgot the last bit of this chapter the first time i uploaded, so it's there now. pls forgive my incompetence ;;;

The thing is...

The thing is.

He's pretty. Really pretty.

Like a girl they say, when their hands linger too long in his hair, stroking, petting, straying further to wander over soft, smooth skin.

He likes when they pet him. It's the only time their touch doesn't hurt, bruise, ache.

So he leans into their hands and looks up through thick lashes, big brown eyes as soft as a doe, and lets them touch him as long they want. Compliant and demure when he's too exhausted from tests and experiments and disappointed faces.

And, the thing is...

It's the only warmth in this place of concrete and cold grey. His heart flutters in a way he didn't know was possible. Makes him feel... good.

He wants to be good.

"Good boy."

He asks Papa what this feeling is, one night when he did particularly well during his tests, and gets to be tucked into bed.

Papa smiles, lips widening slowly over stark white teeth.

"It's love, Seven."

Seven loves films.

It feels like magic every time he sees these pictures moving like they were right in front of him. The men in white jackets use them to teach him things. Once, he got to mimic a gymnast doing cartwheels. That was really fun.

"Alright, copy what the man in the red shirt is doing, okay?"

He nods, and a technician starts the reel.

The screen lights up and colors spring into life— vibrant blues and greens— and there's so many more people than he's ever seen before. Young and old fill the screen, laughing and smiling, some talking and some playing. The camera pans across a sign that reads *Hawkins Community Park*.

"What's that green stuff on the ground?" Seven can't help but ask.

"Pay attention," someone snaps. "It's just grass."

Seven keeps his mouth shut but practically vibrates inside. The grass stuff looks so squishy! And there are white things like cotton balls in the sky! A bunch of kids like him are playing on a big colorful thing that looks really fun.

He's so fascinated by the wonder of it all that he completely misses the man in the red shirt. Instead, he gasps and points when water begins to fall from the sky and everyone starts to scramble.

"What's that! Where is the water coming from? Why is everyone running? They don't like water? Why is—"

"Fuck's sake, Seven! It's just rain!"

The screen goes dark, Seven gets a smack to the head, the film is rewound, and it starts again.

This goes on four more times until Seven finally stops asking questions. He goes to bed with an empty stomach but a mind full of possibilities.

He decides then and there that someday he's gonna see the blue sky and the cotton clouds that drop rain on green grass and tall trees.

Maybe he can even go with Papa!

Papa looks at him with a strange twist to his mouth and tells him no, he can't go outside.

It's too dangerous out there, life threatening, it's safe in the facility.

When Seven tells him that it didn't look dangerous, he gets sent to his room with no food again.

When he asks his handlers if they can take him outside, he gets a fresh bruise on the cheek.

He doesn't stop asking though.

Knuckles tap against glass, the sound loud and clunky among the gentle hum of the lab's machinery.

"So, what does this one do?"

"That one is Seven, ten years old. He can mimic the abilities of others."

A uniformed man chuckles, lighting a cigarette as he observes the experiment across the two-way mirror.

"That so?"

Seated at a table is Seven, pupils blown wide as he watches an orderly sketch out a portrait of a woman.

Dr. Brenner takes a step forward, hands folded behind his back and eyes cool where they land on the boy.

"You see how his pupils are dilated? That is the visual cue that his power is active. For simplicity's sake, we call this first step 'copying', wherein he absorbs the action he is seeing."

As if on cue, the orderly seated across from Seven finishes and places the drawing onto the table. The boy's eyes briefly return to normal as he grabs pencil and paper before expanding once more. His hand moves quickly across the paper, graphite lines already beginning to take shape.

"This second step is the 'mimic'— when he applies the ability he has copied. The visual cue is the same as before."

The other man grunts, takes in a deep pull of nicotine. "So what, he can draw like Michelangelo now or something?"

"Or something," Dr. Brenner nods. "His mimic does not grant him full mastery of a skill, he can only replicate what he has seen. In this case, he will be able to perfectly match that sketch, but tell him to draw another portrait, and he won't be able to. Not in that same skill level he initially copied, that is."

The boy finishes now, pushes his paper forward and places his hands in his lap. A trickle of blood drips down his nose, pupils shrinking, and the orderly gathers the two sheets, exiting through the connecting door.

He places the drawings onto the desk aside the two men before taking his leave with a nod from Dr. Brenner.

The sketches are identical.

"And this, power of his," the man in uniform muses with a gesture of his hand. "Are there other limitations?"

Dr. Brenner pauses, casts a sideways glance at the other man.

"There are," he concedes. "He is best at copying physical skills—things he can visually see. With one short video we had him playing basketball like a pro; however, the more cerebral the skill, the more intangible, the harder it is for him to copy."

The other lifts a thick brow, looks at Dr. Brenner through a curl of smoke.

"Such as?"

"We tried teaching him how to read by watching one of our staff go through several pages of Tolstoy. He knew to move his eyes across the page and could identify the letters, but he didn't understand what most of the words meant. Another time, we tried teaching him Russian. He could repeat every phrase or dialogue he heard perfectly, but once we went off script, we might as well have been speaking Chinese."

The man laughs at that, waving his cigarette around as if they were two pals sharing a joke.

"So he's stupid! Good to know our tax dollars have gone toward making this idiot."

Dr. Brenner smiles tightly, gestures toward a screen on the wall and pulls up a video with a few clicks of a keyboard.

"This is a recording from last week. One of our other experiments, Nine, is able to manipulate heat. She's still very young, can't ignite anything yet, but she is able to produce enough heat to burn human skin."

The screen flickers to show Seven sitting in front of a variety of objects— fruits and toys and what looks to be lumps of metal.

"We had Seven observe Nine during a few of her tests, and he was able to copy her ability."

On screen, Seven places his hand on each object, leaving behind a blackened and burnt form of what it once was. The lumps of metal begin to drip.

The man in uniform fixes Brenner with a look. "Am I supposed to be impressed?"

"General Williams, with all due respect, the implications of this are—"

"I don't *care* about *implications*," the general sneers. "I want results and I want them yesterday. What good is a copy if I already have the original?"

Brenner spreads his hands in a way that could be placating if not for the sharp edges of his grin. "General, why have one tank when you can have two?"

"Doctor," the other scoffs and stubs his cigarette out on one of the portraits. "Why have two tanks when I could have a tank *and* a missile strike? If the kid could teleport into a Soviet base and get me commie secrets we'd be having a different conversation. Need I may remind you this research of yours isn't cheap?"

The grin on Brenner's face barely twitches. "Of course not, general. I know you're a busy man, shall I escort you out?"

The military man gives a curt nod, straightens his jacket, but pauses on his way out. He taps the burnt drawing with a stout finger.

"Pretty woman. Anyone I should know?"

Cold eyes shift toward the two-way mirror, where Seven sits alone, blood under his nose.

"Just his birth mother. No one important."

Seven knows most of the other Numbers. Some he met in the Rainbow Room, and some he met while watching their tests. He likes playing with the younger ones, it makes him feel like a big brother, like he has something to take care of. Three is a bit of a meanie, but Eight is nice, so her and Seven play together when they can.

He never gets to meet Six. For some reason they are never in the same place at the same time.

Seven wonders what they're like, and if they're nice, and if they'd get along. He could show them how to squirt milk out of their nose.

One day, he gets his answer.

The nurses like to gossip a lot, and sometimes Seven learns about cool new things, so he always pays attention. They're at it again today as they unhook him from a machine that reads his brain and get him ready to go back to his room.

"Did you hear? One of them died the other day."

"Are you serious?"

"Now that I think about it, I haven't seen her in awhile..."

Seven keeps quiet even as they pat his hair and usher him from the testing room. Sometimes it feels like they forget he's there, or like he's just a doll to play with, but he doesn't mind. He gets to listen to their hushed whispers.

"So it was her then?"

"Yeah. What a shame, precognition could've been so useful. Imagine being able to see the future. That's a lot of lottery tickets."

"Fat lot of good it did her. Six could predict the future but she couldn't prevent her death."

Seven doesn't know how to feel about that.

When he's back in his room staring at the blank walls, he wonders if he should feel sad. He never met her, but she was still his sister, so shouldn't he cry now that she's gone?

Instead, Seven wonders why Papa didn't want him to copy her ability. It's the only reason he can think of for why they never even saw each other in the hallways. But he likes when Seven can copy something perfectly.

Why wouldn't Papa want him to see the future?

When he's too old for the Rainbow Room and hair begins to grow in places it never did before, things start to change.

He's more moody lately, too quick to become upset and snap at his handlers. It's not his fault though. Everyone keeps pushing and pushing, and nothing he does is ever good enough.

He can't pay attention, can't listen, can't copy certain things despite being forced to try for hours, asks too many questions—

When can I go outside and see the sky?

They tell him he should be getting better, improving his ability and growing smarter. Should stop asking so many questions if he doesn't like all the bruises.

He's useless. An idiot. A complete waste of time.

They call him all sorts of things they think he doesn't understand, but he does. He's not *stupid*, no matter what they say, and he tells them so.

That's when they begin to throw Seven into a tiny dark room.

He *hates* it. Hates how easily they can silence his voice and make him disappear. Like a toy they've grown tired of. So he fights back, tells them that *they* are the stupid ones for thinking they can shut him up. He drags his feet and struggles and maybe gets a few hits in before they lock him away.

They leave Seven for a few hours at first— at least, he thinks so. He's never been good at keeping track of time. But it's not too bad, just annoying and dull. Seven passes the time drumming his fingers against his knee and thinking about the rain.

Papa is there when the door opens, his thin lips turned down in the way Seven knows is disappointment, disgust even. It twists his stomach with shame, fills him with guilt until he can't even look at Papa.

"You have a bit of a rebellious streak, don't you, Seven?"

Seven tries not to squirm. "I just... want to go outside."

"We've been over this before," the older man sighs. "There's nothing for you out there. The world outside these walls doesn't want you. You're too different, special, they'd eat you up alive. But here, we care about you. We feed you, shelter you, nurse you when you're sick. We love you, Seven."

"... I'm sorry, Papa," Seven whispers and tries not to cry. He *is* sorry, because he hates making Papa feel bad, but he just... can't stop thinking about it— the trees, the grass. He wants to know what it's like to walk on something other than concrete.

He never asks for anything, can't he at least have this? Seven always does what they want, even when he's tired and frustrated and they have nothing for him but cruel words and painful strikes. If anything, they owe him this, don't they?

The thought festers in him, like a wound that won't heal. It just keeps growing and growing, spreading inside him like a disease, until finally, he lashes out again.

"Please just let me go!"

They lock him away longer each time.

Hours stretch into days, slowly, slowly, crawling like frozen slurry. Stagnant. Unmoving.

With it goes Seven's resilience, leaving only anxiety and fear to wrap around his chest and squeeze all the oxygen out of him. Now, he doesn't know how long they'll leave him. With every second he spends in the abyss, panic shakes him to his core, tormenting him.

What if they never come back for him?

Just when he thinks he's at his limit, tipping over a razor thin edge that will swallow him whole, the door opens. Almost like Papa knows.

And every time, Seven, on his hands and knees, eyes wide and leaking tears, clambers forward and begs at Papa's feet.

Please no more pleasepleaseplease—

Cold eyes radiate revulsion, and a hand like ice grabs Seven by the chin and tilts his face up to cower before his god.

"Are you done throwing a tantrum now, Seven?"

He just.

He just wants to see the sky.

Maybe he should've known that it would get worse, after that.

Maybe, he is as stupid as they say he is.

Not two weeks later, Seven attacks several technicians. He's particularly difficult during a test, but it's not his fault that they grab him, drag him across the room to start over again and again and again.

He's *trying*.

Why doesn't anyone see that? He's not messing up on purpose!

His body is winding up tighter and tighter, ready to explode. His insides churn like molten lava, straining against his skin, begging to escape.

Escape.

He is so *sick* of these same grey walls. Sick of the concrete that surrounds him, chokes him, taunts him. Because this is all he is ever going to know. He'll never get to feel grass soft under his feet or rain soak into his skin. He'll die here, in the cold.

And Seven, *can't* take it anymore.

So he just.

He *screams* and claws at the hands grabbing him. He wants them to feel what he feels—trapped, suffocated, doomed. He wants them to *die* in this same concrete prison he'll die in. He wants them to rot and *burn*.

Seven only stops when a hand slaps his face hard enough to send him crashing to the floor. He snarls, fists curled, about to launch himself at them until he looks up and all the fight drains from his body.

It's Papa, standing above him, disappointment etched deeply into his face.

“You never learn, do you.”

The cold of the stone floor seeps into his bones and Seven trembles. Ice freezes the blood in his veins and wraps around his lungs until he

can't breathe and he's gasping, shaking, crying.

"sorrysorrysorryI'msorryI'msorryI'm—"

"Sorry doesn't make it better, does it Seven? Sorry doesn't undo the damage you've done."

Dimly, in the back of his mind, Seven sees blurs of white jackets rushing in, crowding around writhing, screaming bodies, the stink of human flesh bubbling and blistering and burning. But his eyes are frozen on Papa. Seven reaches out, tries to take Papa's hand in his, but the older man just steps back, out of reach, and signals to his men.

"Please..."

Rough hands haul him off his feet, fingers like iron digging in deep enough to bruise, and drags the boy away.

"Papa, please...!"

Seven kicks the air and tries desperately to pull and thrash and escape the men with guns and cold eyes. Their grip just tightens until his bones creak and he's wailing, begging.

"I'LL BE GOOD I PROMISE PLEASE PAPA I'LL BE GOOD PLEASE NO!!"

He gets thrown into the abyss anyway.

And now, Seven cries and bangs on the heavy metal door, begging to be let out, until his knuckles grow slick with blood and he realizes no one is coming.

No one cares.

He crawls into a corner and waits. His tears dry up, eventually, eyes instead kept wide open to stare into the dark, and wait.

And wait.

And wait.

One day or week or year later, Seven looks down, just for a moment, and feels something seize him.

He... he can't see anything.

His own body, swallowed by pitch black. Gone. He's gone. Where did he go? Is he dead?

Was he ever even real in the first place?

An ear-piercing sound echoes and reverberates around the abyss, stabbing at him, choking him. It sounds like death, like an animal dying. Something is dying.

Is he screaming? Does he still have a voice?

Is he already dead?

He's lost, he can't breathe— is he still breathing? It hurts. Everything hurts. Darkness cuts into his skin, through muscle and bone, and peels him away layer by layer. Whatever is left of him shudders, curls up and dies.

Can he die if he was never alive?

Does he even want to live?

Maybe, it's what he deserves. A pathetic and sad end for a pathetic and stupid boy.

One day or week or year later, the abyss changes. A flood of light sweeps forward, blinding him. A door is open.

Was there always a door there?

That's how Papa finds him, skin too pale and eyes sunken in, unmoving, staring. An empty husk. Maybe there was never anyone there, in that small body.

But Papa steps forward and places a hand on his shoulder and suddenly, *Seven exists again*. He blinks, and sees color, he has arms and legs, oxygen in his lungs, breathing, living. He shakes, hot tears

streaming down his face, and tells Papa—

“Thank you.”

He saved him.

One hundred days.

One of his handlers mentions it as they draw blood and take his vitals.

He had been in pitch black for one hundred days.

A television is wheeled into Seven’s room, an unmarked VHS popped into the set.

One of the technicians— Shepherd, his badge reads— kneels down to look him in the eye.

Seven sits cross-legged, pillow clutched to his chest, eyes apprehensive and hollow, as if he’s not sure the person in front of him is real.

Sometimes, he's not sure if he ever made it out of the void.

Not all of him, at least.

Shepherd places a hand on his knee, snapping the boy out of his thoughts, and asks him if he’s ready to behave. Seven’s lips press tight and he nods.

He’ll be good.

He wants to be *good*.

The older man joins him on the bed, his chest pressed flush against Seven's back and his legs bracketing the boy's smaller form. Seven tries not to tremble, overwhelmed as he is by the amount of physical touch, the way he can feel Shepherd's breath against his neck.

Solitary confinement starved him in every way a human could be, trapped him in the neverending pitch black cold and ground him to dust, until there was nothing left.

Tears threaten to fall, so relieved he is to be touched again, and bites his tongue instead of asking *why*. He keeps his eyes on the screen when Shepherd hits play.

Films are rare these days, so his heart *sings* with gratitude, that he could possibly be rewarded after what he's done. He doesn't deserve it, failure that he is.

The title of the film pops up in looping cursive, the type that's slanted and pretty but Seven struggles to read. He doesn't know half of the words on the screen.

Tentatively, he asks the older man, "What is 'fucking?'"

Shepherd just laughs.

"That is today's lesson. It's very important so pay attention and copy everything they do."

Seven nods and concentrates on the two young men that appear on the screen. He lets his pupils dilate until there's only a thin sliver of iris and the taste of iron slides down his throat.

"Dr. Brenner designed this new course just for you," Shepherd says, nonchalant, but his words make Seven's heart skip a beat. "Your little episode in the lab made us all realize something."

The men on the screen are talking about things Seven doesn't understand, leaning into each other's space, until one finally presses his lips to the other.

Shepherd's hands are running up and down the length of his inner thighs, spreads them wide. He's petting him. Seven likes petting. Papa knows this, and Papa made these lessons just for him, and that has his heart fluttering in the way Seven knows is called love.

He's so *grateful*.

"You're a growing boy," Shepherd murmurs along the shell of his ear. "Becoming a man, and when that happens, the hormones in your body go crazy. Makes you do things sometimes."

The two men are on a bed now, panting into each other's mouths, their tongues sliding in. They're removing their clothes so fast that Seven wonders why they bothered to put them on. As the men do this, Shepherd tugs up the hem of his hospital gown, so Seven raises his arms up and the gown is off in a flash. Seven settles back into Shepherd's chest, his eyes never once moving away, even when the older man begins to pet his stomach.

"But when these hormones don't have a regular outlet, they can build up inside your body until finally it explodes. Like those times you lashed out suddenly."

On screen, mouths and tongues are everywhere, sucking on each other's necks, their nipples, their penises. Seven tilts his head, intrigued. He would never think of putting his mouth on those places. Commits it to memory.

Shepherd's fingers trace the sharp jut of his hip bones.

"We can't have another incident like that again," his tone deepens, loses all of its previous warmth until it's freezing cold. "Five of our technicians suffered fourth-degree burns. One of them had his flesh seared away until bone was showing. Another one may never regain the use of his hands. Do you understand?"

Fear creeps up his spine, the memory of cold nothingness pressing against his skull, mocking him.

You don't exist.

Seven nods and watches the man on screen finger and stretch himself

open. He won't mess up that badly ever again. He'll be good.

"I want to be good," Seven whispers.

The bigger man of the two slides into his smaller companion, and begins thrusting in and out of him. They're making all sorts of sounds he's never heard before, and it's all so intense that Seven thinks even if he wasn't copying, his eyes would be glued to the screen.

"You can be," Shepherd says, his tone returning to warmth. "We can show you how to be a good boy."

And that fills Seven with *need*. He wants to do this. He'll do *anything*. He'll be a good boy and when he's finished with his new course he can show Papa how good he can be, and maybe then, maybe, Papa won't look at him with disappointment. Papa will smile at him, warm and full of pride. With love.

Seven copies all of the positions and techniques the two men—*queers*, he'll later learn—display, notes with interest the white liquid that comes out when their face scrunches up and they make a really loud, breathy noise. He's never seen that stuff come out before.

Apparently you can swallow it too.

When the film is over, there is something poking Seven's back, and Shepherd's hand moves to cup the boy between his thighs.

Seven gasps, tilting his head back to look at the older man. His pupils have shrunk to their normal size and there's blood dripping from his nose.

"Are you ready to show me how good you are," Shepherd teases, pressing his lips to Seven's forehead.

Seven nods and turns to face the other man, pupils dilating to that unnatural size again, and he can feel Shepherd's hardness twitch against his stomach.

"Fuck," Shepherd breathes out. "That... that's..."

Seven dives in, arms over broad shoulders, pressing his lips to the

other's, opens so that he can lick into Shepherd's mouth and suck on his tongue. He nips at the older man, gets his lip between his teeth and groans, makes noises he didn't know he could. Their teeth clash and it's messy and loud and—

It's like nothing he's ever felt before and it's too much and not enough and he wants to cry. He wants to feel, to touch, to have someone inside him to prove that he's real, that his body is here, alive.

Seven finds himself drowning in it, breathless, surging forward for more, licking and gasping just the way he copied. There's no hesitation in the way he moves, as if he's been doing this for years.

Papa will be so happy his mimic is perfect.

"Jesus fuck," Shepherd moans against him. "You're a goddamn virgin..."

Seven whines, pushing closer, moving to straddle the other, his lips never leaving the other's.

"What... is this called," Seven asks in little puffs of air, not wanting to stop whatever this was.

But Shepherd finally pulls back, a thread of spit connecting them, broad chest heaving for air.

"Kissing," he answers on his way to lick and suck at the boy's neck. "It's a kiss. This, is a hickey."

Seven gasps, threading his fingers through the man's hair, and pulling Shepherd into him.

"Why is a hickey made?"

Shepherd hums, nibbling a spot he knows is going to be a gorgeous purple later.

"To leave a mark. To show that you were there, that you fucked. Sometimes to stake a claim. Show off that someone belongs to you."

Seven breathes, leaning forward to lick and bite and make as many marks as he can. To show how good he was.

“Fuck, you really want this huh.” He chuckles at that, his hands groping Seven’s plush ass while the boy all but worships him with his tongue. “Shoulda known you’d be a little cockslut. Pretty face like that, you’re made for this.”

Pretty. He’s always been pretty.

It may be the only part of him that’s satisfactory, but he’s never known what to do with it. What good was a pretty face when his lab results were below expectations and other Numbers outperformed him. What good was it if he couldn’t make Papa proud.

But now, now he knows. Maybe Seven *does* have an asset of his own. He can prove that he isn’t useless, empty, a failure.

All that one can do is mimic others? What good is that. Boy has nothing of his own.

Maybe, Seven thinks, while he licks his way down to where Shepherd is hard and erect, maybe he’s meant for this. Meant for his pretty pink lips to stretch wide open and take men into his mouth.

“Kid, there’s no way you’re fitting the whole— “ A stuttered gasp. Followed by a breathy moan. Face pressed flush into wiry curls. “God, fuck. How. Fuuuuuck...”

Seven’s heart flutters wildly in his chest as he bobs his head up and down, pulling up to lick at the tip and then swallowing everything again. He wonders if the other man is feeling the same way, if his heart is fluttering too. The thought spurs him on, doubling his efforts, sweat beginning to shine on his skin. He wants Shepherd to feel it too — that feeling called love.

He wants to make the man love him.

Shepherd’s hands are in his hair, pushing him down as if there’s any more to take, and then yanking him back up and off him.

All sorts of wet drools out of Seven’s gasping mouth, his cheeks

flushed and pupils so damn big. He reaches forward to stroke Shepherd, his hand gliding easily with pre-cum and spit.

“What is a cocks slut?” Seven asks, voice raspy and weak.

“That’s what you say after deepthroating me like it’s the goddamn Olympics?” Shepherd laughs, his head falling back against the sheets. “Means you’re a slut for dick. You want it all the time, you’ll fuck anyone so long as they get their cock inside you. Doesn’t matter which hole, you just need it.”

Seven shivers. He thinks he wants that, to have the empty inside him filled.

The older man sits up and pulls Seven forward, guiding him so that the boy’s face is down on the bed, on his knees, ass curving up in an obscene way. Shepherd grabs those soft cheeks, feeling the plumpness of it, spreading him open to see a pretty pink hole. He moans a breathy *fuck* and buries his face between those cheeks, his tongue running up and down the rim, tracing the shape of it.

“*Ohmygod*,” Seven practically *mewls*, high and breathy.

Shepherd slides in, past the stretch of his rim, fucking the boy with his tongue, and Seven—

Seven’s just gone. His heart feels like it’s going to explode out of his chest, and he’s sobbing, begging for more. His mind is a hazy mess, like his brain has melted and all that’s left is this trembling body making filthy noises.

“*P-lease...*” Seven whines, pressing back against the other man. “*More, ahh... feels good—*”

Shepherd fucks deep into him *hard*, his tongue going as far as it can, and Seven comes apart like a supernova. He feels all the air rush out of him, vision going white, and he’s floating, every cell in his body drifting, a cloud of stardust and bright colors drifting through space. It’s like time has stopped and wrapped him in a blanket of blissful numbness.

Seven wants to stay in this moment forever.

When his brain finally reconnects with reality, Shepherd is leaning back, hand stroking himself slow, admiring the view. Seven's stomach is wet with the white substance. He runs a hand through it and discovers that it's sticky. Seven brings it to his nose, sniffing it, then sucks it off his fingers.

It's interesting, a little salty. Not very tasty but decent enough to swallow.

"Kid what the fuck," Shepherd is groaning, hand squeezing himself at the base and eyes screwed shut. "I'm going to fuck you into this mattress. Prep yourself."

A bottle of lubricant is tossed at him, and Seven nods shakily, determined to prove his worth.

He coats his fingers and reaches around himself, ass still up in perfect view, and sinks one finger in down to the knuckle. His body is still loose and pliant from earlier, and one finger becomes two, then three, and he nearly sobs when it doesn't feel the same.

He can't. It can't be himself. He needs someone else. Needs them to touch his skin, remind him that he has limbs, has a body. Needs to be tethered to this earth lest he float away and disappear into the abyss again.

"I need.. you," Seven pleads, doe-eyes locked onto the older man. *"Inside...mmn.. me..."*

Shepherd grins, a sharp glint in his eye, slicks his dick up with lube and shoves Seven's hand away to line his cock up to the boy's wet hole.

"Time for the real test," he chuckles, hands clenching tight around Seven's narrow hips. "Show me how much of a good boy you are."

He shoves in all at once, slamming into the boy until he's buried to the hilt and throwing his head back with a breathy moan.

"Fuuuck, you're tight."

And Seven, just.

Can't breathe. All the oxygen is punched out of his body the moment Shepherd pushes in. It's too hot and his hair is sticking to his forehead with sweat and all he can think about is how *full* he feels.

It's so *big* and *deep* inside, like he can feel it pressing against his stomach, like it's a part of him, his body, that he never knew he was missing

He feels *whole*, head floating and dizzy, yet he's never been so grounded. It feels *so good* to have someone touch him so intimately, to feel his entire body *shake* with someone within him, to feel that he is *real*.

Shepherd circles his hips, groaning at the tight wet heat around him, and Seven jolts when the man slaps his ass.

"Well? Say it. You know the words," Shepherd taunts, licking his lips like a man starved of water.

Seven blinks, slow and hazy, gazing up at the older man through thick lashes, and parts shining wet lips.

"Please, fuck me."

A wide, *hungry* grin nearly splits Shepherd's face, and then he's pounding into Seven at a brutal pace, nearly pulling his cock out completely before slamming back in. Seven chokes, gasps, tries desperately to breathe, completely overwhelmed, hands scrambling across his sheets to find purchase. Shepherd's grip just tightens around Seven's hips, pulling his body back to meet his thrusts, the sound of feverish wet skin slapping *obscenely* filling the room.

Through the haze, Seven realizes the older man is talking to him, asking him, "You like that ya little slut? Like my *fat* cock fucking this *tight* ass?"

"Y-esss," Seven hiccups, tears streaming down flushed cheeks. *"Feels.. ah! ahh! s-so good..."*

"Yeah? You want me to cum inside your *wet cunt*? Want me to fuck you til you can't walk?"

Seven doesn't know what that means, exactly, but he's nodding fervently, begging, *"Pleasepleaseplease.. mmn!! inside, please..."*

His vision blurs for a second as Shepherd pulls out and flips him flat onto his back, hiking the boy's legs around his waist and then shoving back in with a loud *squelch*.

There's blood running down Seven's nose and his pupils are dilating and shrinking like crazy, pinning like a bird, struggling to retain his mimic as Shepherd pounds mercilessly into him.

"Look at you," the man breathes, thumbing at Seven's spit slick mouth. "Trying so hard. *Such a sweet boy.*"

Seven *keens*, heart fluttering so hard he feels as if he's going to burst open.

He takes the man's finger into his mouth, sucking on it wetly, and hooks his ankles together to pull Shepherd further into him. His entire body bounces with every brutal thrust, skin shining with sweat, and he holds onto the other's arms for dear life.

"Ah, ahh.. am I... good?" Seven hiccups, big brown eyes so wide and sincere.

The older man groans at that, his thrusts beginning to stutter, "Yeah, yeah you're *so fucking good*. So wet for me. You wanna come for me, *slut?*"

And Seven, so desperately fixated on pleasing the other, doesn't even notice his own cock is hard again until Shepherd grabs him, jerking him off in time with his thrusts, and then he's slamming his head back, arching off the bed like a bow about to snap.

"Please..." the boy practically wails.

Shepherd chuckles, leaning forward to take Seven's bottom lip between his teeth and grins.

"Good boy."

Seven *screams*. White floods his vision and his body seizes up,

tightening around the man inside him, shooting ropes of sticky white cum onto his chest and dribbling down Shepherd's fist.

He's warm, so feverishly, deliciously warm, heart about to *explode* and so blissfully fucked out he barely registers Shepherd thrusting in once, twice, before spilling inside him, filling him up.

The older man flops down with a groan, caging the boy in, cock still snug in that warm, wet hole.

It takes several minutes before Seven can catch his breath, pupils shrunk back to their normal size, and he licks his lips hesitantly.

"Did... I pass?"

Shepherd just laughs, muffled against the boy's skin, mumbling, "Yeah, you passed kid."

Seven positively beams and launches into several questions about what things are called and why it's done, and the other just lays back, gathers the boy flush against him and buries his face into his soft brown hair, responding with lazy words and a hand petting his back.

Pressed this close, Seven can hear the man's heart fluttering in his chest, just like his own, and he can't help but smile.

"Is this love?" Seven asks, fingers stroking the skin above Shepherd's beating heart.

Shepherd pauses, a slow smile spreading wide over his teeth, just like Papa's so long ago.

"Yeah, sure."

Everyone likes Seven now.

They all smile when they see him— technicians, researchers,

orderlies, nurses, anyone really.

After they unhook him from IVs and brain scanners or whatever else he's been plugged into for the day, someone will pet his thigh, flash a grin that's all teeth, and Seven knows to get on his knees.

His body is decorated with the good kind of bruises now.

Some days, he doesn't even have to go to the lab.

Those are his favorite days— when his door is opened in the morning and that look greets him. Then he gets to make others feel good. He gets to make them feel what he knows is called love.

Seven loves all of them, men or women, though he finds that the male staff come to him more.

Sometimes, after they're done making each other moan and scream, Seven will hold them as they spill their secrets.

Wilson, one of his handlers, shoves him away after about thirty seconds, rushes to get his clothes back on and blurts out something about not being a homo. Something about just needing a wet hole.

James the neurologist always cries after holding him down and slamming into him brutally. He says it's because he's ashamed of being a queer and he'll never be able to tell his mother.

Daniels, a researcher who hardly ever leaves the facility, is gentle and likes to take his time. He pets Seven's hair and tells him how much he reminds him of his son back home.

Shepherd just likes to fuck him.

But when Seven is really good, he gets to kneel beneath Papa's desk and keep him warm with his mouth.

It's unreal how so many people like him and want to touch him, mark him, fill him. It keeps him from disappearing, from sinking into that chasm of endless nothing. Instead, he's dizzy with how high he's become from so much love making.

He needs it bad, craves it like the sweetest drug, and it's an addiction he knows he can't live without.

It's the only thing he needs.

Seven is so happy.

He only meets Eleven once before everything comes crumbling down.

It's a few years later, when he's taller and everyone jokes that soon he won't be jailbait anymore, whatever that means.

Papa brings him in to watch her crush a soda can with her mind. He doesn't want Seven to copy her just yet, but Papa says he has big plans for the both of them.

"Those who will revolutionize the world should be acquainted, don't you think?"

Eleven is nudged forward but her eyes never leave the floor, her little fists clenching nervously.

Seven just kneels down to her level and gently takes one of her hands, stroking lightly until her fingers uncurl. He slides their arms together, tattooed numbers facing up to stand side by side.

"Hello, sister."

She doesn't smile, but her face softens when she finally looks at him, understanding glistening fondly in her eyes.

"Hello, brother."

Notes for the Chapter:

i hope it wasn't too dry lol it being a prologue and all

i gotta set stuff up ;;;
next chapter is already partially written tho and we
get Billy yaaaay (ノ´▽`)ノ*:・°

p.s. if ur wondering who Shepherd is he's the dude in
s1 that the lab sends first thru the gate and he gets
eaten alive so lmao karma (ಠ_ಠ)b

p.s.s. i write this on my phone while waiting for
matches in dead by daylight so if there are any
glaring mistakes or u think i missed some tags please
let me know! ☆

2. a fond farewell

Notes for the Chapter:

uHHHH sorry this took longer than i thought, i've been drowning in schoolwork lmao also this chapter turned out wayyy longer than i thought it'd be so i split it into two. which means chapters 2 and 3 go up today yaaaa i haven't had time to proofread them tho so if they're total trash i apologize yaaaa

smthg occured to me while i was writing, so i thought i'd address before anyone maybe gets confused? long story short if ur wondering why Stevie here has more of personality than Eleven first did, it's cause he was socialized way more than her. i think in canon she like only talked to Brenner?

we are now in s1 time btw anyway lmao pls enjoy (^v^) b

Fucking hell Seven loves this.

"Yeah just like that baby come on, fuck me hard."

He's bouncing on Shepherd's dick again, knees spread wide over muscular thighs and riding the older man like there's no tomorrow.

"Fuck your cock feels so good," he groans, burying his face against the other's neck.

"Yeah it does. Biggest dick in the lab ya know," Shepherd laughs.

Wow, pretentious asshole.

Seven bites him for that.

"Ow, geez what was that for? I'm just being honest," the man whines.

Did he not bite him hard enough?

Seven stares straight into his eyes as he pulls out and sits back on the other's thighs. "You wanna come or not," he deadpans.

"Oh come on," Shepherd nags at him. "You're not gonna blue ball yourself. Hop on my dick."

And yeah he wants that cock back inside railing him till he screams but he's not gonna admit that.

"I can find someone else to finish the job. What're you gonna do? Ask one of the nurses?" Seven rolls his eyes. "That'll go down well."

The older man opens his mouth, closes it, frowns.

"Don't you have a super special thing with Brenner today?"

He stretches and does an exaggerated yawn, scratches his tummy to be extra annoying. "No that's Monday."

And then Shepherd gives him that smarmy grin he hates and, well, shit. That's never a good sign.

The man pinches his cheek like he's a child and practically coos at him, "Silly Seven, today is Monday."

"Are you serious?"

"As a heart attack."

"... crap, okay then."

He grabs Shepherd's cock and slams back down in one go, grinding his hips and using the other's shoulders for leverage.

"Fuck! Kid, a little warning next time," the other groans almost painfully.

Seven just screws his eyes shut and focuses on the feeling of being deliciously full. "No time to lose." God yesssss he's so deep he's gonna

feel this all day. "Can't mmn keep Papa waiting."

"That right?" Shepherd grabs his dick and his fist is gliding over him and yeah, he's not gonna last much longer. "Such a thoughtful child. So devoted."

Seven mewls as a shiver runs down his spine and goes straight to his weeping cock. Heat squeezes his chest and deprives him of air in the best kind of way.

"Aww look at you, sensitive as a girl. You like being praised, huh?"

And if he nods too fast he'll just deny it like hell later. "Ye-ahh ah! Fuck, yes, yes please... please..."

White heat scorches through him like a volcano about to erupt and his heart is racing, needy whimpers spilling from his lips like water.

He's so close fuck he just needs him to say it.

Shepherd's lips brush the shell of his ear, nuzzling the side of his face, and whispers, "Good boy."

Seven comes so loudly he's pretty sure everyone down the hall can hear him.

Not that they'd mind.

When his vision returns he's slumped against Shepherd, drooling on his hairy chest. He's still orgasm hazy but he can feel the other man petting his hair and god if that doesn't make his heart flutter.

"I love you," he mumbles somewhat coherently.

Smug bastard just laughs like always. "I know."

Seven hums, allowing himself about thirty seconds of afterglow cuddling before he's pulling out with a wince and redressing into his usual grey scrubs. They're stiff and scratchy but they're definitely an upgrade from his old hospital gown.

"You're really gonna go with cum in your ass," Shepherd asks like

there's something wrong with that.

Seven tilts his head, confused. "Papa needs me, I can't be late."

The man snorts and waves him off, moving to get dressed as well. "They really did a number on you huh. Go on then, daddy's waiting."

He doesn't know what that means but Shepherd says weird things sometimes, so.

Probably nothing.

The lab is chock full of people— men in uniforms with shiny medals and all sorts of other important looking stuff. Seven didn't know Papa had invited guests, and he wonders why they're here.

Is the experiment this significant?

A lab technician guides him to a monitor, explains that a camera inside the Bathtub will allow him to see Eleven, and that Papa wants him to copy her ability.

And that's when the man himself strides in. He seems happy, excited even, and that makes Seven's heart skip a beat. Today must really mean a lot to Papa.

As if sensing his staring, Papa looks at him and smiles and Seven's face positively beams with joy.

Right, he has to do his absolute best, he can't let Papa down.

"Gentlemen, today is a very special day," Papa's voice fills the room. "Today, is the day we make history."

Seven tunes out the rest of the speech, knowing the words were for today's guests more than anyone else.

He meets Eleven's eyes for a moment, and she looks so scared, he tries to give her the most reassuring smile he can. It doesn't really help, but she recognizes him, so at least she knows she's not alone.

She's lowered into the Bathtub and Seven fixes his eyes on the screen in front of him, pupils dilating, watches her close her eyes.

Psionic types are really difficult to copy, especially when he doesn't know exactly what he's looking for, so he takes a deep breath and concentrates.

Not that it matters, in the end.

Eleven screams and everything goes dark.

"I thought I told you to track her down! She's a little girl she couldn't have gotten far!"

"We're looking sir, but— "

"I said. Find. Her."

Papa is seething. His face is almost as red as the cuts on Seven's arms.

He got hit by some shrapnel when the Bathtub exploded, nothing too bad, just some metal fragments. Not compared to the men that were shredded by whatever that creature was.

Seven stares at it now, the glowing crack in the wall, the eerie vines crawling out of it like a parasite trying to invade.

It doesn't belong in this world, there's something repulsive about it that just bleeds *wrong*.

Why did Papa want Eleven to make contact with it? It killed so many people so quickly— that thing with no face and way too many teeth.

It's... terrifying.

"Seven."

He snaps out of his thoughts and rushes over to where Papa has sat down, the man running a hand down his face in frustration.

"Yes, Papa? Is there anything I can do to help?"

He looks so much older now, Seven realizes. Like the catastrophe of today has carved the lines in his face even deeper. It twists his stomach with concern, he hopes he can make Papa feel better.

Papa pats his thigh with a smile. "Why don't you keep Papa warm for awhile?"

"Of course!"

This he can do no problem. He kneels between the older man's legs and makes quick work of his belt and zipper.

Papa groans when he slides in, tilts his head back and threads his fingers through Seven's hair.

"Do you love me, Seven?"

He looks up at Papa and does his best to nod. He loves him more than anything.

"Then you'll do as I say, won't you?"

Seven hums in agreement. Surely Papa knows this already, that he would do whatever he asks of him.

"You copied Eleven's ability, yes? You can find both her and the creature then. We can bring them back here."

That—

He can't.

Papa saw the creature with his own eyes, why would he want *that* in the facility? It'll kill them all.

And... he isn't sure he actually was able to copy Eleven. He did see *something*, but he doubts it's enough for what Papa wants him to do.

Seven moves to pull off and tell him so, but the man just grabs the back of his head and shoves him back in.

Papa's lips pull back into a grin that's all stark white teeth. "You'll do this for me, won't you Seven?"

He really, really doesn't want to.

But...

Slowly, he nods.

Papa strokes his cheek.

"That's my good boy."

Of course, everything is easier said than done.

Because for all he tries, Seven *can't* mimic Eleven's ability.

He can hear whispers, barely, as if they're smoke slipping through his fingers in the dark. It's not enough to pinpoint where the girl had gone. It's not enough for anything, really.

That's the best he can do.

He's been at it for hours, there's blood gushing down his chin and staining his clothes, and he's no closer to finding anyone than when he started.

He's feeling insanely dizzy and the corners of his vision are starting to get blurry and he's pretty sure he's about to pass out but—

"Try. Again."

Papa won't let him stop. Not even to rest.

When the man himself needs to leave for one reason or another, he has one of his handlers step in to make sure he doesn't pause for even a second. Meanwhile, Seven has been confined in the interrogation room the entire time.

He hasn't slept or eaten in over twenty-four hours.

He's trying not to cry, but.

"Heaven's sake can you do anything right? It shouldn't be this difficult. Try again."

Yeah, he's crying.

There's a loud *thunk* and Seven wonders where it came from, seeing as it's just him and Papa and oh—

His head fell onto the table. That's why everything is sideways now.

His face feels wet. Is he lying in a pool of his own blood?

Briefly, he wonders if he can drown in it.

A hand grabs a fistful of his hair and yanks his head back up. Papa looks angry and his lips are moving but Seven is struggling to even stay conscious at this point.

"... you had one task! One! And you couldn't even do that! What use are you!"

"I'm... sorry, Papa," he sobs. "I can't... I'm, it's too much..."

The grip on his hair turns painful, vicious.

"You're supposed to be the backup. The stand-in, the extra. You get that? And even then, you're utterly and completely useless. You're nothing but *bullshit*."

"Please... " Seven whimpers.

It hurts. It hurts so much.

It feels like a knife being driven through his chest, like something is seizing his heart and stopping it from beating. He hasn't heard these words in a long, long time. Not since...

Papa let's his head drop back onto the table with a hard slam.

Vaguely, as if underwater, he hears Papa call out to someone, sees blurs of white rush in.

He barely feels hands grabbing him before his vision blacks out.

When Seven wakes up, it takes him a minute to realize that he is actually awake. His head is still fuzzy, like someone stuffed cotton balls in his ears; and, he can't... see anything. But he feels the heaviness in his limbs and the cold hardness of concrete beneath him.

Oh.

He's...

He's in solitary confinement.

No, he... he can't be. He hasn't been thrown in here for years. He's been good, hasn't he? Papa wouldn't do this to him. He tried to find Eleven, he tried and tried until he couldn't anymore. It's not his fault... right?

"Papa...?"

Seven feels his hands shake as he fumbles around in the dark, trying to find something, anything.

Cold steel meets his fingers. He knows. He knows this door, has seen it shut him away far too many times. His entire body trembles now, terrified.

This can't be happening, it *can't*—

"Papa! Papa please!"

Seven bangs on the door as hard as he can, hopes someone can hear, can come rescue him.

He can't do this again.

Surely, someone will let him out. He's been a good boy. He's been so *good*. He's done everything they've ever asked for, he's done the best he could every time.

Hasn't he?

All he's done for *years* is love them, with every part of his body.

"SOMEONE! ANYONE! PLEASE!"

The skin of his knuckles splits open, smearing blood across the metal door. He cries out and slumps down against a wall, shaking, crying. There's pounding in his skull like it's about to cave in and he's trying not to hyperventilate, but it feels like there's no air here, like the walls are closing in on him.

He's going to die.

He's going to suffocate and crumble away like dust sucked in by a black hole and no one will ever find him.

Would anyone even look though?

Papa was so, so angry. Called him useless. All Seven has ever done is let down the people he loves.

Maybe he should just disappear into nothing. It would be doing everyone a favor. His limbs already feel numb, dissolving into the cold pitch black. The air in his lungs has probably already evaporated.

In the end, it looks like Seven will shrivel up and die empty, will fall apart like ash.

No matter how hard he tried, no matter how many times Seven let

someone inside him, he couldn't become real enough for anyone to care about him.

But...

They *had* told him they loved him, didn't they? All those times he was good for everyone and their hearts fluttered together. Seven *always* told them he loved them, and—

No one... ever said it back...

That can't be right, all these years, someone must've said they loved him.

Like a film reel, everything plays back in his mind in an instant. Every single time he got on his knees, lied down on his back, made sure to please them in any way possible, not one person said those words. Not even Papa, who smiled that toothy grin and would pet his hair when Seven kept him warm.

I know.

Of course.

Thanks.

Those were the kind of responses he would get, if they didn't just laugh it off.

Suddenly, something like a spark ignites in him, like a match catching alight.

Everyone has been leading him on, *lying* to him without even having to actually tell a lie. They've never once actually loved him, yet here he was listening and fulfilling all of *their* wants. It wasn't that Seven didn't try hard enough, they just didn't give a single fuck about him from the beginning.

Seven's *entire life* has been a lie.

And Papa, who always demanded from him, who was not *ever* satisfied, who today all but slammed his head into a table after

pushing him well past his limits—

Papa is the worst of them all.

Seven's hands are shaking again, but not with fear. Fire is burning inside him, spreading throughout his body, reanimating him, taking his limbs back from the abyss.

Because the man he's looked up to, has tried so desperately to earn affection from, has been lying to him his whole life.

So yeah, Seven is fucking *furious*.

He snarls, slams his hands against the goddamned steel door that has trapped him in the dark too many times.

And who was it that threw him in here to be carved from the inside out? To let the void sink its claws into him and eat him alive?

Papa.

Burning heat is racing through him, blazing like wildfire into his hands, past his fingertips, searing bright red into metal.

Eleven, his little sister, had looked so *scared*. She didn't want to go into the Bathtub. She knew that there was evil behind that veil between worlds, and it was Papa who forced her to rip open. All of the lies Seven was too stupid to see, Eleven saw through clear as glass.

The sounds of scorching heat and dripping liquid fill the tiny room now, emanating from the flaring glow beneath Seven's hands.

His sister, he realizes, is incredible, smart, ingenuous even. Eleven knew exactly what to do the second she had a chance— she escaped.

The last remnants of the lock melts away now, and Seven shoves the door open.

So.

Why shouldn't he escape too.

The corridors are silent, almost ghostly in how empty they are. It must be nighttime, so most of the staff should either have gone home or retired to their quarters within the facility. Security at this point is just a skeleton crew that hangs out in the surveillance room, and they spend nearly their whole shift playing cards rather than watching the monitors.

Seven knows, because he's sucked off most of the guards on nights like this.

He sticks to the corners as quietly as he can anyway. He's got one shot at this and he can't mess it up.

The endless white of these halls are maze-like, every turn looking like the last, but the layout of this damn place is seared into his mind like a brand.

God he is so not gonna miss this place.

And, he can finally, *finally* see the sky. Since it's night, maybe he can even see the stars. He's only ever seen them in pictures, will they really glitter and shine? And the trees, can he see them in the moonlight? Oh, and the moon...

So jittery he is with nerves and excitement, that he forgets to check if there's anyone in the office he just passed, until—

"Seven? Is that you?"

Shit.

Seven plasters on a smile as he turns around, trying not to look as panicked as he actually is.

It's Daniels, the researcher who practically lives in the lab. Of course he'd be here *fuck*, Seven really can't do anything right can he.

"Oh, um, hello." Wow he is not suspicious at all. "I was just, called in, to someone's office. For a late night, uh, session."

"You're covered in blood, son. Are you alright? Why don't you come in for a minute, I'll help get you cleaned up," Daniels offers with a smile.

Seven glances down and realizes he's still in the scrubs he bled all over earlier. When he lifts a hand to his face it comes away with dry flakes of blood.

"Um, no I'm alright, thank you. I really need to go," he says, backing up slightly.

The man just grabs his wrist and guides him into his office. "Nonsense. You can't go strolling about like that, son. I think I have a handkerchief you can use."

So now Seven stands there, simultaneously anxious and annoyed, while Daniels dabs at his face with fresh smelling cotton.

The office is a neat little space, with books lined up perfectly and a wooden desk that is meticulously organized. There's pen and paper lined up exactly perpendicular to the office chair. The guy must've been doing late night paperwork when he spotted Seven.

"We should probably do something about those clothes of yours as well," the other suggests with a gleam in his eye. "Why don't you take them off?"

Seven's hands clench into fists, body suddenly becoming taut with growing anger. So, *that* is what he really wants, hidden beneath a cover of fake kindness. Seven is being lied to *again*.

"Thank you. But I really have to go now—"

"Oh come now, I'm sure whoever called can wait a bit. Let me take care of you, son," the man huffs in a way that's probably supposed to be friendly but Seven really, *really* doesn't care.

He's so sick and tired of all this.

So he looks directly into Daniels' eyes and asks, "Did you ever love me?"

"What's this about," the guy chuckles. "Haven't I told you before? You remind me so much of my son, he's just about your age too."

Red flashes across Seven's vision for a brief second, his knuckles turning white with how tightly he's holding himself.

"That's not what I asked."

Daniels frowns, clearly taken off guard by the way Seven isn't just rolling over.

"Now there's no need for attitude— "

"Then answer the damn question! Tell me the truth!"

There's a pause in which Daniels is visibly calculating something, organizing his thoughts.

"Shouldn't you be in solitary right now?"

Shit.

Seven's eyes widen, begins to panic, stutters out a hasty, "No. I was um, just sent to my room. Everything is okay now."

The older man's eyes narrow in suspicion. "No, I specifically recall that Dr. Brenner said that you were to be kept there overnight."

"I was let out early," Seven blurts out.

The exit is two turns away and he's come way too far to let it all fall apart now. He *is* leaving this place tonight. If this man could just, go away.

"... I think I should call Dr. Brenner to make certain. He seemed very adamant that you remain in there," Daniels says, reaching for the phone on his desk.

He doesn't so much as lift it from its cradle before Seven snatches the

man's wrist away in a painful grip.

"No."

Daniels startles, tries to snatch his hand back to no avail. "Seven let go this instant, that's an order!"

"I said no!" Irritation builds rapidly like a fever, threatening to boil over. Resentment rears its ugly head— he is so *done* with all these constant demands. "You can't tell Papa. I need to go now."

But of course nothing's that easy.

"... You're trying to run away, aren't you? Like Eleven." Daniels regards him coldly now, as if sizing up an enemy. "I won't allow that. You are not permitted to leave this facility."

"*I don't care*," Seven hisses through grit teeth. "I'm leaving and you can't stop me."

"On the contrary," the man scoffs. "I can. We made you. You take orders from us."

"No I don't," he all but growls, rage burning through Seven like fire.

Daniels just laughs. "Yes you do. Who do you think you are? You're our property."

"No." Seven grabs a fountain pen from the desk. "I. Am. Not."

There was a time years ago when Papa and his military friends thought Seven could be used for combat purposes. It didn't pan out, as by then they had found better uses for him, but he was trained in a few things, such as field medicine.

Unfortunately, for Daniels, that means Seven knows exactly where to aim to rip into the man's carotid artery.

And if he wasn't covered in blood before, now he's *soaking* in it.

Red sprays across Seven's face and body as the other chokes, stumbles to the ground, gurgles in his own fluids and dies.

For some reason, watching this happen is... satisfying. One less person to lie to him, he guesses.

He squats down and searches the man's pockets until he finds it—Daniels' keycard. Originally he was just going to force his way through the exit, but this works a lot better.

"Thanks," he tells the corpse with a pat on the back.

Seven makes sure to shut the door behind him before all but sprinting to the exit.

He swipes the card into the lock and pushes past into the lobby area. He's never even been here, and he can't help but feel giddy with excitement.

He can see it— the outside— right beyond the glass entrance.

It's probably a bad idea, but he runs to the doors and shoves them open and when the air hits him it's—

It's like nothing he could ever imagine.

The air in the facility was so sterile, recycled, but the outside, it smells so nice, he doesn't know what it is but it feels so good to breathe in.

Seven looks up and gasps, nearly cries when finally, *finally* he sees the sky.

Calling it beautiful would be an injustice.

It's dark but painted with hues of blues and purples, speckled with tiny white twinkling stars, and the moon is full and shining such a pretty silver. Seven feels like he can see the entire universe from just this spot. It stretches so wide that he can see it no matter which way he turns.

"Whoa," he breathes, completely enraptured.

Seven could stare up at the sky forever he thinks, but he has to get as far away from the lab as he can.

The front gate is guarded day and night, so he takes off toward the back of the building, where he can see a cluster of trees in the distance.

And wow they look humongous. Seven thought he was pretty tall but these things are *huge*.

He slows once he sees the chain link fence. Barbed wire runs along the top, so climbing is out. Luckily though, he has the next best thing.

His pupils dilate, bringing forth his mimic of Nine's power once again, and uses the burning heat in his hands to melt a hole in the fence.

Seven dashes into the woods, bare feet running across soft moss and cool earth.

He looks up at the stars between branches and leaves and can't help but laugh.

He's free.

Notes for the Chapter:

so idr if the fence around the lab is electrocuted or not it's been a Hot Minute since i've seen s1 so for simplicity's sake let's just say it isn't lol

i think this chapter turned out a bit short cause of where i had to cut it, but imo it made sense to split it where i did?? also, Billy ended up showing up in chapter 3 instead of 2 ;; i apologize ;;;

but it's up now! (ノ´▽`)ノ*:・° i hope u are enjoying thus far!!

3. tricks and treats

Notes for the Chapter:

FINALLY billy boy makes his appearance (; ∇ ;)

i wanted this part to have a lighter mood so i hope it isn't too jarring?? lol anyways sl originally takes place in November but i changed it to October because Halloween

also the spacing isn't working properly a ha haaa ha thanks AO3 :^) enjoy!

Seven wanders amongst the trees for awhile, not really heading in any specific direction, just going wherever the wind takes him.

He wiggles his toes into the dirt, runs his hand across tree bark, picks up nice looking sticks for no other reason than he can— the outside world is so incredible!

It's cold outside but not even that bothers him because seeing his own breath is super cool.

Pinecones smell really nice, he discovers, but they're too prickly to carry. Sticks are better, he can use them to poke at things, like funny looking mushrooms.

He trips over some roots and just barely catches himself before faceplanting directly into a rock when he hears music.

It's bouncy and fast with what sounds like a feminine voice singing to the beat. Seven follows it, curious, and sees lights the closer he gets.

Just beyond where the trees come to an end is a house filled to the brim and spilling out with people. The music is blasting from inside, something about a girl just wanting to have fun? Through open glass doors he can see everyone drinking from red cups and dancing. They look about his age, though they're all dressed very strangely, but they're all smiling or laughing.

He's pretty sure this type of social gathering is called a pantry or party, something like that.

It looks like so much fun...

So he just, kinda.

Walks straight from the woods and into the house.

No one seems to notice though, not even when he wanders through the mass of giggling, dancing people. Everyone is so colorful, some wearing masks and others with animal ears. Maybe this is normal for these kinds of gatherings?

Seven walks aimlessly around the place, taking in as much as he can. He finds himself at a table lined with food and drink when a plastic red cup is shoved into his hands.

"Here," some girl with cat ears says. "You look lost. Drink some punch, loosen up."

The liquid inside looks harmless, like a dark red juice, so he takes a large gulp and nearly coughs up a lung when it burns down his throat.

"What... is in this?"

"Everything," she laughs. "I've never seen you around before. I'm Tina. You someone's plus one or something?"

He doesn't know what that is but she says it in a friendly tone so he nods, takes another sip of the burning juice because everyone is doing it so he probably should too?

"So what are you, like, an escaped mental patient or what?"

"Uh." Seven has no idea what she's talking about but the word 'escaped' makes him nervous. "What?"

The girl, Tina, just rolls her eyes and giggles. "Your Halloween costume, duh. You look like Michael Myers in that one movie when he busted out of the asylum. Totally bloody and stuff."

Fuck.

He'd completely forgotten he was covered in blood.

But, she thinks he's dressed like a character from a film. So, everyone is also dressed like characters? And, that's normal for this place.

"Yeah, yes I'm, an escaped mental patient," he says with a laugh that's probably too loud, takes another drink of the weird juice. "Exactly that. You got me."

Tina just flips her hair over her shoulder and bats her lashes at him.

"Yeah, I'm awesome like that." She leans in real close and runs a hand through his hair. "You're like, really cute. How bout we go somewhere a little quieter and have our own little special party?"

Oh, so the word is party.

But why would they need to go to another one when they're already at one.

"Um, like where?"

"Meet me in my bedroom upstairs, okay cutie?" Tina winks before she turns to leave and there's a gleam in her eye and *oh*.

She wants sex.

Seven downs the rest of his juice.

He can do that.

It hits him in that moment that he can choose whoever he wants to fuck now that he's free. God just that thought alone makes him giddy with excitement.

He can do *anything* he wants.

So he finds the staircase and climbs up to the second floor with all the intent of meeting Tina, and promptly gets completely and utterly lost.

There's a million doors and he has no idea which one leads to her bedroom.

He opens one and finds folded linens. He opens another and gets a shoe thrown at him because someone's having a threesome and apparently that's something no one else is supposed to see.

Weird.

Maybe it's at the end of the hall?

Except when he opens the door it's a bathroom because of course it is and there's a guy inside and—

"Oh." Seven blinks. "You have really pretty eyes."

"... What the fuck."

It's true. His eyes are a beautiful shade of blue flecked with shades of green. It reminds him of both the sky and forest and Seven feels like he could get lost in them.

He sort of already is.

"Dude, earth to whoever the fuck you are, stop staring," the guy with pretty eyes sneers. "You some faggot, huh?"

Well, if he recalls correctly, the word faggot refers to men who have sex with other men, but Seven has sex with women too, so.

"Nope," he replies and continues staring anyway. "Your hair is so shiny and golden. Like... curly gold."

For one very long minute, the only sound is pop music blasting from downstairs.

"Did Tommy put you up to this? Get the new guy drunk and see if he'll turn queer or some shit?" The blonde narrows his eyes dangerously, squares his shoulders and rises to his full height. "Cause if I find out this is some sick joke, I *will* beat you into the cement."

Seven just tilts his head, confused. He's heard plenty of times from

the staff at the facility that being gay is a bad thing, but he still doesn't really know why. Especially because all those men had sex with him anyway.

"Who's Tommy?" Seven asks instead, big doe-eyes blinking at the other. "I was looking for Tina, she has ears and a tail like a cat, but there's so many doors. I found a closet, then I found a threesome, and now I've found you."

The guy tenses like he still doesn't believe him.

"You're serious?"

"Serious," Seven nods. "I don't like liars."

The pretty blonde holds his gaze, searching, before he finally deflates, leans back against the counter and runs a hand through his hair. "What're you still doing here then, go find your girl."

He's not wearing a shirt, Seven notices, getting an eyeful of glistening abs. He kinda wants to touch them.

Like, why are they wet? Is he sweating? It's not *that* warm in here.

"I like looking at you, though," Seven chirps, stuffing his hands into his pockets as he rocks back on his heels.

The other teen looks like he's caught somewhere between angry and bewildered. "You barge in on a man taking a piss, you say weird shit, got hair like Farrah fuckin Fawcett, and you expect me to believe you ain't a queer."

"Ah, sorry." Seven steps into the bathroom and closes the door behind him, locks it for good measure. "Is that better?"

He'd hate to come across as rude, especially to someone he just met.

That someone still levels him with a flat look, though.

"How in the fuck is that what you took away from what I just said."

"Uh." Seven fidgets. Is this one of those questions he's not actually

supposed to answer? He isn't used to the way outside people talk yet. "Yees...?"

There's another moment of silence where the two of them do nothing but stare at each other, muffled bass in the distance. The quiet is only broken when the blonde teen snorts, throws his head back and laughs so hard his entire body shakes.

It's loud in a way that fills the room and warms him inside. Seven thinks he'd like to hear it again some time.

"Shit, if I didn't know any better I'd think you genuinely came in here just to get your hands on my dick."

Oh. Well he can do that.

"Do you want me to?" Seven asks, eyes wide and sincere.

"What."

Seven drops to his knees in front of the golden-haired boy and runs his hands down toned thighs. He licks his lips nice and wet, the way he knows men like, enjoys the way blue eyes follow the motion. "Would you prefer a blowjob?"

A sharp grin spreads slowly across the other's face. "Okay, pretty boy. I get it. No queer shit, just two dudes helping each other out."

"Yeah," Seven nods. "Helping."

Seven makes quick work of his belt and zipper, tugs his ridiculously tight jeans down a bit and *oh*

He's not wearing any underwear.

That is one thick, tasty looking dick.

"Makes it real convenient when pretty little twink's blow me in bathrooms, ya know," the blonde smirks, threads his fingers into Seven's hair and yanks him forward. "So you gonna suck my cock or what."

Like it's his last goddamn meal on earth.

Seven looks up at him through his lashes, blinks slow as his pupils blow unnaturally wide. He runs his tongue along the jut of his hip bone and practically shivers at the taste. *"Mmn, pretty please."*

"Fuck, that's a nice view."

The teen starts petting Seven's hair and this time he does shiver, practically purrs at the sensation and nuzzles his face against tanned skin.

"I can be good for you," Seven murmurs, trailing kisses down the length of the lovely half hard cock in front of him, gives the tip a kitten lick. "I'll be so good for you."

The blonde licks his lips, bites down to suppress a groan. "Is that right?"

Seven grins, pops the head in and swirls his tongue around it. He sucks on it greedily, his eyes fluttering shut, moans high and needy. *Fuck*, there really is nothing like a *fat cock* in his mouth. He wants to choke on it until it's the only thing he can taste. Until his throat is raw and he can't even speak.

Fingers tighten in his hair as a deep groan sounds above him. "How many times have you done this, pretty boy? You help a lot of guys out?"

Seven peeks up with hazy eyes and flushed cheeks, the corners of his mouth twitching as if to smile, as if to say *would you like to find out?*

Without warning Seven swallows down until his jaw is stretched wide, face pressed flush against golden skin. Cock fills his mouth and he can't help but *whine* because *god* he loves it, he *loves* having dick in his mouth, loves it *so damn much*.

"Fuck, haa, god fucking, shit." The other is gasping, breathless, head tilted back and body drawn tight. "Yeah that's it, so fuckin good for me baby."

Oh the way that runs down Seven's spine and straight into his dick.

More please he wants it he needs it please.

It's gotta be at least forty-eight hours since Seven had last been fucked and honestly he was starting to get an itch under his skin. He was so caught in the rush of escape that he almost forgot until now—with some guy's hot, throbbing prick on his tongue— just how much more at ease he feels like this. Sex is so familiar to him, it's like being wrapped in a warm blanket, makes him feel secure in a way.

And *fuck* does he need it like he needs air.

He sucks *hard*, hollows his cheeks and caresses the underside of *delicious fat cock* with his tongue. It tastes so fucking *heavenly* his eyes roll back and he's helpless to the moans that pour out of him like a flood. One hand grips strong hips while the other reaches around to grab at the blonde's ass and pull him in as deep as possible.

"Babe, *shit*, you want it bad, fuckin gagging for it." The other teen circles his hips, feeling out the warm, wet cavern of Seven's mouth. "Best head I've ever, *fuck*, had."

Seven pulls off with a loud *pop*, hair flopping onto his forehead, spit and pre drooling out the corners of swollen lips as he takes in large gulps of air. He uses the slick left on the guy's dick to stroke him smoothly from root to tip.

"Do you wanna cum on my face or in my mouth?" His voice is absolutely *fucked* and he's so *hard* he's palming himself through his pants just looking at how much the other is getting off on this. "I'll swallow if you want."

The golden-haired boy just laughs.

"Pretty boy you are something else." Hungry blue eyes gaze down at him with a devious glint. "I think this thirsty little slut wants to swallow."

"Yes," Seven agrees way too quickly. "I do. Please. I want it. Please."

The other teen leans forward with a grin that's all teeth.

"Then take it."

Fuck yes.

Seven all but inhales thick, leaking cock, vigorously bobbing his head as he alternates sucking at the head and then taking in the whole length. He's so *painfully hard* he's pressing down on his own throbbing erection, working himself desperately through bloodstained fabric. He could die right here, mouth stuffed full of a stranger's dick and he'd be grateful, fucking *ecstatic*.

Honestly what better way is there to go.

"Just like that baby, *shit*, don't stop. I'm close."

Yesyesyesyes—

With a stifled whine, Seven doubles his efforts, working his mouth faster up and down fat cock, spit smeared everywhere and *squelching* obscenely.

"Fuck that's it, so good, so fuckin good."

It's when the blonde grips thick locks of chestnut brown and begins thrusting erratically into him that Seven knows he's at his peak, so he wraps his arms around those lovely tanned hips and *yanks* the teen forward, burying cock *deep* in his throat, humming and pulsating slick walls around that tasty dick.

"Fuck, I'm gonna, I'm— "

Hot cum spurts into Seven's mouth, the familiar taste of salt and musk coating his insides, and he *relishes* it, *moans* and milks every last drop he can. The blonde trembles, hips stuttering as he rides out his orgasm with choked gasps, and Seven is so *euphoric* that he could please this boy so much, it has him coming with a muffled whine, hand grinding down *hard* against tented pants.

He came, he liked it, maybe he likes Seven—

Seven pulls off with an audible *pop*, giving the tip one last lick before he tucks the guy's dick away and sits back on his haunches.

He looks up, lips swollen and hair a mess, and asks with wide eyes,

"Was I good?"

"Christ," the other laughs. "Yeah you were, good boy."

HesaidithelikeshimhelikesSeven—

Seven positively beams at him, eyes sparkling and heart fluttering away. He practically bounces back up, standing face to face with his new companion. "So what now? Have you tried the nasty juice yet?"

The blonde looks at him funny, raises an eyebrow as he checks his hair in the mirror. "The jungle juice? Yeah shit's a fuckin fire hazard. Dunno why anyone drinks it." He straightens his leather jacket. "Anyway, this is the part where we both fuck off and pretend this never happened. Adios compadre."

Wait.

"What?" Cold crashes over Seven like a wave, flooding his body and threatening to drag him under. This couldn't be happening again so soon, right? "What do you mean? I thought..."

"Thought what?" The other teen looks annoyed for a second before he drags a hand down his face, lets out a sound of frustration. "Look, we're in the middle of hick country. They see two dudes together, they're gonna set us on fucking fire."

On... fire?

"Why?"

The blonde gets that bewildered look on his face again, bordering on incredulous. "The fuck do you mean 'why?' You been living under a goddamn rock your whole life?"

"Uh." Does the underground laboratory complex count as under a rock? The building above was made of stone he supposes. "Yes."

There's another long minute of silence and Seven is starting to wonder if this is normal or if he's doing something wrong.

The furrowed brows and hard glint in pretty blue eyes tells him he's

definitely doing something wrong. "Who the fuck are you? I don't think I've ever seen you at school."

School, the place children go to for education from kindergarten through the twelfth grade, if Seven's not mistaken. He has a vague idea of it but he's certainly never been to one before.

He hasn't been anywhere until tonight.

"I don't go there— to the school," he replies simply, as if that explains everything.

"What, you from outta town or something?" The blonde narrows his eyes and stalks forward, two fingers pressing into Seven's chest. "Who the hell goes to *Hawkins* on a *Wednesday* night for a *shitty* Halloween party?"

Ohh, so today is Wednesday. Or maybe Thursday, depending on what time it is.

"I was walking through the woods and found this party, and it looked like fun, so I wanted to join," Seven says with a shrug. "I guess, because I came from there, I am from outside town?"

Several expressions flash through that face in a second and honestly Seven has never been great at reading people's moods, especially not that fast, so he's not really sure if he said the right thing or not.

"Right. So I'll repeat once again. Who. The fuck. Are you." He punctuates every pause with a jab to Seven's chest, until he's pressed against the wall with blue eyes glaring down at him. "What are you doing here."

Okay, *not* the right thing then.

How did this go wrong so fast? He was answering all his questions honestly. Why is he upset? Is being from outside a bad thing? Genuinely, Seven was drawn towards here because of the bright lights and catchy music, there's no particular reason *why* he's here, he was just curious about this thing he had never seen before...

"I um, don't know?"

Even Seven cringes with how lame that answer is.

"You don't know," the other teen parrots back, completely and utterly unimpressed. "Okay, how bout you start explaining yourself before I — "

Unfortunately, Seven never gets to hear the end of that sentence, because all at once the ever present thumping music cuts out with a loud *screech* and the walls rattle with the force of slamming doors and pounding feet.

"COPS ARE HERE! EVERYONE OUT!"

Cops...?

"Shit," the blonde curses under his breath. He pushes away to unlock the door and peek outside, mutters more curses, and stomps back to grab Seven's wrist and yank him out the door. "We gotta go. You're coming with me."

"O-okay," Seven startles but readily agrees.

As soon as they're in the hall, Seven's companion drops his wrist faster than he can blink. It leaves him with the creeping chill of anxiety, but, he remembers the comment about being set on fire, so surely the other boy is just trying to protect him? And he's even taking Seven with him!

The blonde is shoving his way through the stampede of scrambling costumes and downing the stairs two at a time. Meanwhile, Seven is just trying his best not to get trampled or smashed against the wall.

He's not really doing a good job at that.

Everyone is either screaming or laughing and it's so damn *loud* it has Seven's ears ringing. He's struggling to get past two girls who keep shoving their wings in his face, has to cough up gross plastic feathers so he can try to shout before he completely loses the other. "Where are we going!"

"Anywhere but here! Come on!"

Seven sees a flash of golden curls dart out towards the back and then he's gone.

Great.

He has no clue where he's going.

It takes a minute to wrestle out of the wave of people bottlenecking toward the front door, and he narrowly misses tripping over a pink feather boa that somehow wraps around his ankle, but Seven finally manages to stumble out into the backyard along with some others that immediately bolt in all different directions.

Right, so.

Which way did the blonde go.

For some reason it just occurs to Seven at that exact moment that he doesn't even know his new companion's name.

Hm.

Ah well, he'll just ask later.

The forest is really nice, and with so many trees it would be a good place to hide in the dark. There's no way any cops would find them there.

Seven runs as quietly as he can towards the comforting embrace of the woods, even double checks that no one is following behind him. Which is why he doesn't see the figure step out from behind a tall pine and runs straight into a hard chest and falls flat on his ass.

"Well well, look what we have here."

Seven gingerly pinches the bridge of his body because *that fucking hurt* and he can already taste blood. He looks up to see what he ran into and there's a blue uniform and a shiny badge and—

Shit.

He ran straight into a police officer.

"Knew there'd be one of you that'd try to hide here," the cop who's name tag reads 'Powell' chuckles. "Come on. You can call your parents from the station."

Officer Powell yanks Seven to his feet, secures both arms behind him in a firm grip, and marches them down the side of the house and towards the front.

He can see the flash of garish red and blue lights and he doesn't really know what it means but he has a sinking feeling in his gut that he needs to get away fast.

Seven digs his heels into the dirt and blurts out, "I don't have parents."

"Sure you don't." Seven can practically hear the cop rolling his eyes. He's shoved forward and the grasp on his wrists tighten. "You can call grandma then."

They're in the front yard now, completely littered with glass bottles and red cups, and the ugly too bright police vehicle comes into view and *fuck* he needs to go *now*.

"I don't have that either!"

His whole body struggles, twisting and pulling, throwing his entire weight into getting the hell *out* of this man's hold and he feels the slide of his arms *almost* slipping through before he's slammed into the side of the vehicle and something cold clicks around his wrists.

"Christ, you wiggle more than a goddamn earthworm. I didn't wanna have to do this kid, but." Cool metal clicks tighter. "You really ain't making this easy. Come on."

Seven tries not to panic when he realizes he can't really move his arms, that he's been bound in some way, but before he can even process what's happening he gets tugged back so that the officer can open the back door and push him inside.

"Wait—!"

The door is slammed shut.

Shit.

There's a metal grid dividing the front space from the back almost like a cage and everything is cold and grey and smells kinda bad like musty socks and Seven is really trying not to lose it but—

"Well shit. They got you too huh."

Seven nearly *jumps* out of his own fucking skin.

His blonde companion is sitting right next to him— *how the hell did he not notice*— with his wrists bound behind him as well. The other teen's lips are curled like he's trying to hold in a laugh and Seven's face heats up and he kinda just wants to cease existing now.

Seven shakes his head and tries not to die of embarrassment. "What are you doing here?"

"Picking dandelions with the pigs what the fuck does it look like I'm doing." He jingles the metal rings binding his hands together. "Got caught by the sheriff and the bastard handcuffed me."

Hand... cuff?

"How did you get caught? It looked like you knew where to go... " Seven wonders aloud.

The blonde just snorts and sinks into the musty smelling seats, blue eyes burning holes into the metal screen in front of him. "Didn't see you following so I doublebacked except *Cindy the dumb bitch* broke her stupid ugly heels and pushed me straight into the sheriff's fuckin arms." If looks could kill, this entire vehicle would explode from the force of that seething glare. "The hell were you anyway?"

"Um." Seven fidgets. It's his fault they both got into this mess, isn't it. "I didn't know where to go so I was gonna hide in the forest cause I mean personally that's where I would go it's a really cool place but there was a cop waiting there and I sorta ran into him?"

The other fixes him with the most confused-yet-potentially-murderous look Seven has ever seen. "Why the *fuck* would I run into the fuckin trees when it's the middle of the goddamn *night* and you

can't see *shit*."

Well, when he puts it that way...

"I, just, uh, didn't know where you went? So I took a guess?"

"Where the hell else would I go except down the street where all the fuckin cars are parked, where *my car* is parked, so that we could, ya know, get the fuck outta here."

Oh. That, makes sense...

"I— I'm sorry," Seven hesitates, words practically dripping with guilt. "I didn't mean for this to happen—"

"Sorry don't mean shit," the blonde sneers. "Is 'sorry' gonna help us get out of this? Huh?"

Seven freezes.

'Sorry doesn't make it better, does it Seven? Sorry doesn't undo the damage you've done.'

Oh god. He's doing it again.

He's ruining everything.

'... you had one task! One! And you couldn't even do that! What use are you!'

No, please... no...

He can't... he can't do anything right. Even outside the lab, he's completely useless.

Seven has to fix this, he has to.

"I can fix this, I promise," he manages to stammer out from his rising panic. "I can get us out. I promise. I can do it. I can be useful."

"Yeah?" His companion just scoffs and turns to glare out the window. "And just how're you gonna do that?"

Okay, think. They need to get out of this vehicle, and they need to remove the metal cuffs. There doesn't seem to be a way to open the doors from inside, but if at least their hands are free, maybe they can —

Wait.

His hands.

"What are these handcuffs made of," Seven blurts out suddenly.

"Dunno. Steel? The fuck does it matter?"

Steel. He can do that, it's within his range.

Seven shuffles forward to lean away from his bound wrists. It takes him a few tries but he manages to grab the chain linking the cuffs, and lets his pupils dilate, bringing forth his mimic.

*I don't know where you are, but you've saved my life so many times today.
Thank you, Nine.*

The metal begins to heat up, glowing a dull orange as it starts to go soft.

"... The hell are you doing?"

Dull orange shifts into a bright yellow, growing fiery hot. The chain feels like hard clay now.

Just a little more...

"Hey, pretty boy. I asked you a question."

Steel turns to putty and Seven snaps the chain in half, both arms coming away with a metal ring still attached, but at least he can actually use his hands now.

"What. The fuck."

Seven turns back to his companion and holds his hand out. "Your turn, let me see them."

"No. What. You— " The blonde is gaping at him, eyes wide and darting between Seven's melted cuffs and his face. "How did you do that."

"I melted them," he responds like they're talking about the weather. "Come on they could be back any second."

The other looks like he wants to protest, his body practically oozing wariness, but he shifts around to lean into the window and hold his arms out.

Seven hears a breath, and then, "Hurry up and do it then."

He takes the chain between his palms, being vigilant about staying as far away from touching the blonde's skin as possible, and begins to heat the steel.

"I'll be careful not to burn you, don't worry."

Something like a stuttered laugh escapes the teen. "Yeah that's only one of my concerns right now."

Once the metal is soft enough to break, Seven tears the chain apart.

"Okay, try not to touch the hot parts until it cools down." Blood trickles from his nose as he watches the other lift his wrists in front of him, severed handcuffs dangling in front of his eyes, brows furrowed like he's trying to figure something out. "What now? Can we break the windows?"

"Breaking glass is too noisy, they'll be on us before we can even breathe."

No windows. Got it. But what does that leave them?

His companion drops his hands all of a sudden and shoots a calculating look at him. "Can you melt anything?"

"No, I can't go past a certain point." Seven looks down at the heat radiating from his palms like a furnace. "I can only copy as much as the original can do."

Blue eyes level him with a flat stare. "You have so much explaining to do." The boy leans over Seven and taps on the door, a bit below the window. "Locking mechanism should be around here. You don't have to get through the entire thing, just enough so we can push it open. I'll keep watch in case the shitheads come back. Think you can do that?"

"Yeah," Seven nods. "Gimme a minute."

He places both hands on the indicated spot and concentrates on heating it up as quickly as possible. The first layer goes fast, grey plastic warping and turning into a gross, acrid smelling goo.

There's a gagging sound somewhere behind him.

"That smells so fucking nasty."

Seven bites back a laugh. "Sorry."

He's reached the underlying metal parts now. They seem to be doable, but they're much thicker than the chains on their cuffs, so it takes longer before they start to go soft.

"*Shit*. Cops are coming back. We gotta go *now*."

Shitshitshit.

"I'm not, it's— the thing is too dense!" Seven is *not* panicking except for the fact that he absolutely is. "I need more time!"

"We're all out. Move."

The blonde grabs him by the shoulder, yanking him back and squeezing past the awkward narrowness of their cage to trade places with him.

Seven turns off his mimic, eyes shrinking back to normal, and uses his forearm to wipe away his nosebleed.

"What are you doing?"

His companion doesn't bother to answer, just grabs the metal grating

with one hand and the headrest with the other, lifts steel-toed boots to press against the partially melted hole, and pulls back to *slam* his feet against the door.

The sudden impact of the kick is so loud Seven nearly jumps. Again. "What happened to not making noise?"

"That was five minutes ago, pretty boy. Try to keep up."

He smashes his boots into the door three more times before *finally* it bursts open with a thundering *crack*.

"And that's how it's done," the blonde looks back just to throw a smug grin at him but honestly Seven can't even be annoyed because *holy shit* they really just did that.

"You can gloat later come on," Seven responds, cooled hands pushing at the broad back in front of him.

Wow this guy is *solid*.

They slip out of the police car quick as a flash and slide into the shadows behind a nearby hedge. The only two officers in sight seem to be distracted by a drunk pirate who won't get down from the tree he's climbed into.

"Bless these dipshits, we're actually gonna make it outta here," Seven's now partner-in-crime laughs under his breath. "My car's three houses down, follow me. And *don't* run into the woods this time."

Seven's face does *not* heat up at that comment. "It was a *reasonable* guess..."

The two manage to sneak down the street where a blue car sits waiting for them. Once the doors are unlocked, they drop onto cold leather seats and shut themselves in with as little sound as possible.

Maybe it's because he's now in a safe space, or because the interior is so drastically different, but it hits Seven all at once that he's never actually been inside of a vehicle before. It doesn't look like anything he could've ever imagined.

"This is so cool," he gasps in wonder. Seven has a sudden need to touch *everything*. "What does this do?"

"Hey, hands off the radio." Seven's wandering hands get smacked away. "I get one decent station out here and if you break it you're buying me a new one. Got it?"

"But I don't have any money..."

The only things in his pockets are lint and the bloodied keycard of a dead man.

"Sucks to be you then huh," his companion teases with a wicked smile. He pushes the key into the ignition, eyes locked straight ahead where blue and red still flash. "Hold on, this might get a little bumpy."

"What— "

The blonde turns the key and the engine *roars* into life and Seven is getting real tired of jumping at this point but before he can even open his mouth to complain, a shout catches their attention.

"Hey! What do you think you're doing!"

A man with a round belly and a big hat stands in front of the police cars, face twisted into a deep scowl, and Seven gets the vague feeling that maybe he should feel sorry for what he did, but.

The man takes off running toward them and yeah, he doesn't really wanna deal with that right now.

"See ya, old man," the boy next to him cackles.

Tires *squealing* against asphalt is the only warning he gets before the blonde punches the gas and Seven is *thrown* against the window from the force of the car speeding into a sharp U, only to be slammed back against his seat when the acceleration is floored and they practically *fly* down the street.

"Yeah baby! Now that's what I'm talking about!"

The other teen is whooping and hollering, swinging the wheel around to throw them into turns and sailing into the night, celebrating their close escape.

Meanwhile, Seven has all his limbs splayed out in some starfish-like attempt to brace himself against anything he can hold onto and not get flung into every direction.

"Okay, um." A particularly sharp right jerks him hard into the side panel and yeah, no. "Whoa okay stop the car! *Stop the car!*"

They spin into a semicircle that has Seven *screaming* before they jerk to a halt, car parked perfectly in one piece beside a streetlight.

The blonde takes one look at him and practically doubles over, howling like a madman until there's tears in his eyes. He slaps a hand over his mouth to maybe stifle his laughter except he's not actually stopping, so.

That's great.

"Holy shit you should see your face right now," he sniggers. "You good?"

No.

"Yeah, I'm good." Seven slowly detaches his white knuckled grip on everything and blindly attempts to figure out how to open the door because he can't move his eyes away from the road in case they suddenly rocket forward into oblivion again. "I'm just, gonna."

He manages to pull the latch open and stumble out into the dirt just in time to throw up everything in his stomach.

Which, the only thing in there is the jungle juice from earlier, so it fucking *burns* even worse coming back out.

With one last heave that's mostly spit and stomach acid, Seven wipes his mouth with the back of his hand and climbs back into the blue car.

"Okay good to go."

"Uh." The other teen looks completely thrown for a loop. "You sure you're okay?"

Before Seven can answer, his stomach lets out a loud, desperate rumble. How many days has he gone without food now? Going on three, he thinks. That's not too bad...

Seven's thoughts are interrupted by the sound of the engine springing to life again. When they pull away from the side of the road however, they drive at a slower, smoother pace.

"Come on. Let's get you something to eat."

So.

This isn't how he expected his night to go. At all.

He *was* just gonna get wasted until he couldn't tell up from down and find some easy bimbo in a stupid costume to bury his cock in and convince himself that any warm, wet hole is fine, but then the prettiest damn thing he's ever seen literally stumbles into him and offers him a fucking *blowjob* and, well.

Who the hell can say no to that?

How they ended up in the shitty 24/7 diner by the highway at two in the morning still has him reeling, though.

There's Wham! playing softly on a radio somewhere because no one in Hawkins has taste, of course. The decor is hideously tacky as if to remind customers that they are in fact, in hell, and there's no one else here except some guy in the corner who is either sleeping next to his cold plate of eggs, or is dead.

Billy really can't bother to give a fuck about that right now.

"Hey what is this word?"

The boy with eyes too wide and innocent points to something on the menu.

"... Waffles. It says waffles."

"Ohh," the pretty boy says as if he knows what that means, pauses for a second, then asks, "What are waffles?"

Was this guy literally raised by wolves?

"Just order it. You'll like it."

"Okay." Another pause. "What is a 'strawberry milk shake?'"

Maybe he's an alien.

"Just, order it."

Soft brown hair flops when he nods and looks back down at the colorful pictures. Pretty alien boy is about to ask something again when their waitress walks up to them with her pencil and pad, and before even she can say anything, Billy cuts them both off.

"He wants a strawberry milkshake and waffles. Lots of waffles. I'll have a black coffee, thanks."

The woman who's bright name tag reads 'Delores' or some other shit like that scowls and yanks away their menus before disappearing into the kitchen.

"... I was still reading that," the alien pouts.

"She's got stuff to do," Billy waves it off. "I meant what I said earlier. Explain."

Because he's since had time to come down from the adrenaline rush of juking the cops, and when he thinks back to how suspicious this guy was, how he appeared out of nowhere with no ties to this town, how he can fucking *melt steel* with his *hands*, it kinda gives him the heebie jeebies.

The kid doesn't look dangerous— he was enthralled by the sugar packets on their table for fuck's sake— but Billy knows that looks can be deceiving.

He's had experience.

"Umm, okay." The brunette sits back and tilts his head. "What do you wanna know?"

"I wanna know who let Duran Duran become a thing *what the fuck do you think I wanna know?*" Is this boy really that clueless? "How the hell did you melt through metal."

"With my hands," he says, even lifts them both up to show him.

"That's not— ugh."

Okay, new approach. If this alien was raised by coyotes or whatever, he probably doesn't have a sense of social awareness, right? He might need more specific questions.

"How are you able to melt things with your bare hands?"

They'd gotten rid of the rest of the handcuffs off their wrists in the parking lot earlier, with pretty boy very carefully pinching the rings between two fingers so as not to burn him. A trickle of blood came out his nose, which was weird, but it was wiped away before he could say anything. The scraps of metal left were tossed in the dumpster behind the diner, and Billy can't even explain the amount of relief he felt once they were gone.

If he'd been taken to the police station, if they had called Neil...

"It's kinda hard to explain," the brunette murmurs, dragging Billy out of thoughts. "I can copy and mimic things other people do by watching them. It's like... I can *see* how it works, like it's being dissected in front of me and I can see all the parts that make it function."

"X-Ray vision, huh."

Pretty boy frowns. "It's not X-Rays, I can't see *through* things."

Flores the waitress chooses that exact moment to drop off their milkshake and coffee as if just to glare daggers at them that scream *I'm judging you*.

Billy just rolls his eyes.

Fucking bite me you middle-aged cow.

"Whoaa."

Alien boy is fucking dazzled by a milkshake. Big brown eyes literally sparkling over a completely normal cherry-on-top *milkshake* and Billy immediately hates it because the only thing his mind can think of is: *cute*.

The brunette starts to take a sip from the straw stuck in there, but he must decide it's not efficient enough cause he tosses it to the side, plucks the bright red cherry onto a napkin, and throws his head back to chug the whole damn glass.

He slams it down like he's just won a fucking drinking contest.

"Wow!" There's whipped cream all over his face and it looks really weird combined with all the Halloween blood but there's nothing but amazement in his eyes. "That was delicious!"

Billy just throws a handful of napkins at him.

"Keep talking. So you... 'copied' fire hands from someone else?"

The implication that there are multiple of whatever this boy is, is kinda unsettling.

"Mhmm," he nods, wiping away cream and dried flakes of red from his face. "My younger sister, Nine. It's her power."

Nine...? The fuck kinda parent would call their kid that.

"Why is she named after a number?"

Alien boy dabs at a particularly stubborn drop of blood on his nose. "We all are. It's what Papa called us— Numbers."

Something is beginning to bother him, like Billy already knows he's not gonna like what he finds at the end of this road. He's never really been one to listen to warnings, though.

"That's not a name."

Chestnut brown hair falls to the side as the other boy tilts his head, confused. He picks at more dried theatre blood on his cheek.

"Of course it is. All the experiments are named this way."

"Experiments," Billy echoes back, brows furrowed. This can't be good. "What do you mean by 'experiments?'"

Wide brown eyes are wandering around the diner now, like it's the first time he's ever seen one before. There's a cold creeping of realization that it probably is the other boy's first time in a place like this, and Billy doesn't really know what to do with that, and *that* irks him to no end.

Because he hates not knowing what to do, it's a form of weakness, vulnerability. It makes him powerless, and he is so sick and fucking *tired* of that shit, but the more this mystery boy talks, the more Billy feels like he's a tiny drop in an endless ocean.

"Exactly that. Papa said we're special, and he and all the people at the lab helped us train our abilities. Not all of us survive... but he said it was to change the world," he pauses, thinking, and a frown appears on his face. "Papa and all of them turned out to be liars though."

There's a lab, full of people, and experiment kids, being trained to 'change the world.'

What the fuck does this even mean?

It sounds fucking insane, like some weird government conspiracy bullshit lonely weirdos in basements like to scream about.

And the alien has spent his whole life in this shit?

Billy briefly sizes him up and down. "How old are you anyway?"

"I have no idea," the brunette answers with absolute confidence.

Okay.

This boy has got to be fucking with him.

It's all a stupid Halloween prank, isn't it? And here he is at ass o'clock in the morning just buying into some crazy ass story because what? The kid's really nice to look at? Because he can do *wicked things* things with that perfectly shaped mouth?

Because he kinda secretly wants it to happen again?

The alien makes a quiet little *oh* like he's just remembered something important and it's so fucking cute Billy wants to *punch that stupid gorgeous face until it breaks*.

"What's your name?"

"My name?" Billy hisses. "Fuck that, who the hell are you?"

The boy with a face that's way too pretty shrugs. Pops a maraschino cherry into his mouth. There's whipped cream smudged above his lip that makes Billy want to do filthy things.

"My name is Seven." He nudges his empty glass forward. "Can I have another strawberry milkshake?"

"No. Not until you stop fucking with me and tell me the truth. You've had your fun, Halloween is over. Quit the experiment conspiracy shit and I'll let you leave with only a slightly broken nose." He leans forward and gives his most threatening smile. "Got that?"

"But, I— "

"Ahem."

Snooty waitress is back, plate of waffles in hand and eyebrow raised like the uppity bitch she is.

"Lover's quarrel?"

Oh that absolute fucking cunt.

"Drop the waffles and fuck off somewhere I don't have to see your wrinkly ass face, Doris, or else," Billy all but growls at her.

What little color she has drains from her pasty face and she does actually drop the plate on the table, almost shatters the thing by the sound of it, and rushes back into the safety of the kitchen.

Billy turns his rage back to 'Seven', who freezes instantly, mouth open and waffle in hand.

"You. The truth. Now."

"But I am telling you the truth?" 'Seven' blinks at him, doing a real convincing job of looking confused. "I told you earlier, I don't like liars."

"Yeah sure, or maybe that's all part of the act. Fake as the blood all over your lame costume," Billy scoffs.

School is in less than six hours and he already feels a massive hangover coming on not to mention that he has to deal with Max hogging the bathroom in the morning and then bitching at him until he drops her off, so if they could just get through this, that'd be fan-fucking-tastic.

'Seven' just looks at him like he's the weird one here.

"It's not fake blood."

It's the sincerity in his voice that stops Billy cold.

"You wanna run that by me one more time."

"It's not fake," 'Seven' shrugs and takes a bite out of his waffle. "I had to kill one of the staff to get out of the lab. Though some of the blood is mine from before that."

The murderous alien chews his waffle.

"Wow these are really good too!"

What the actual fuck is happening.

"Prove it." Billy fixes him with a hard look. "Then maybe I'll believe you."

Pretty boy actually reaches into his pocket and slaps down a bloodstained card.

"I ran into him by accident but turns out it was lucky," 'Seven' stuffs another waffle into his mouth. "Cause I just used that to open the door."

The card looks legit.

Billy would know, because he's been using fake IDs to buy liquor and get into bars for years. It has a weight to it, there's security markings embedded in, it has an actual fucking magnetic strip on the back. Nothing about it looks printed or fake.

There's some guy's name on the front and he realizes this is the man that was killed.

By the boy sitting across from him, who's pretty much inhaling his waffles at this point.

"We're leaving. Now."

Billy slaps down some cash and nearly launches himself out the booth.

"Money's on the table, Boris!"

There's a garbled yell from the kitchen that he doesn't care to decipher. He's halfway out the door by the time 'Seven' manages to grab all his waffles and scramble after him.

"Wait for me!"

They sit in the Camaro, parked behind the old abandoned junkyard, and talk.

Well to be more accurate, Seven talks and Billy sits there trying to process what he's hearing.

Seven— who's not an alien and is in fact named a number— tells him everything. He tells him about the underground lab, all the

researchers who work there, the other Numbers, the experiments.

Billy thinks he's starting to wrap his head around the actual government conspiracy happening in fucking Hawkins, Indiana of all places, when Seven hits him with the *we accidentally ripped open a portal to another dimension and a bloodthirsty monster with a billion teeth came through and we have no idea where it is* and then he's completely lost again.

Flyers of the missing Byers boy and how he seemingly vanished without a trace pop into mind. The possibility of some tiny kid getting ripped to pieces by some otherworldly creature is, a lot.

He thinks about Max for a second.

She was friends with that one, wasn't she? If she had been with him, then she could've also...

Seven's in the middle of explaining how his sister Eleven is the reason he was able to escape when Billy just blurts out, "Why are you telling me this."

Brown eyes that remind him of that stupid fucking cartoon *Bambi* stare at him, confused.

"You asked."

"No that's not, *fuck.*"

He needs a cigarette. Or ten.

Billy grabs his pack of Marlboros and lights up with a sigh, inhaling a deep breath of sweet, relaxing nicotine. He exhales a whirl of smoke and sinks into soft leather.

Yeah that's better.

He doesn't even realize his eyes have slipped shut until a loud hacking noise startles them open. Seven has a hand slapped over his nose and mouth, trying to stifle his coughs.

"What is that *smell?*"

"Oh, sorry." Billy rolls down his window, signals for the brunette to do the same. "Guess there's no smoking in the lab, huh."

Seven just wrinkles his nose and leans closer to the outside air.

Billy chuckles, blows out another puff of smoke. It's kinda fun to rile this one up. He'll have to try it again some time. For now he just taps away ash and stares at an especially uninteresting scrap of sheet metal.

"What I meant is, why are you trusting me with all of this? We just met. You don't even know my name."

Seven hums. "Okay, so what's your name?"

That's not his point but, might as well.

"Billy. Billy Hargrove." He throws in a wink if just for appearance's sake. "I'd say 'nice to meet you' but I think we passed that hours ago, right around the time you sucked my dick."

That pretty face grins at him anyway, amusement clear in his eyes.

"It's still nice to meet you, Billy."

God he fucking hates how stupidly nice this boy is.

"Seriously though. How do you know I won't just drag you back to the lab?"

The brunette tilts his head. "Are you?"

"No."

"Okay then," Seven shrugs.

Billy sits there for a moment, cigarette in hand burning away, just staring at the boy like he can't believe how gullible he is.

Gullible or dense as hell.

"That's it?" Because there is *no* way pretty boy is *that* easy. "That's enough for you to trust me?"

Now Seven looks at him in disbelief.

"Yes?" The sincerity in those bright eyes makes Billy want to gouge them out. "You're nice. I don't think you would lie to me."

The cigarette nearly snaps in half by the way his hands suddenly curl into iron like fists.

In a flash he grabs Seven's bloodstained top and yanks him forward until they're noses brush and the only place to look is directly into each other's eyes.

"There is *nothing* nice about me," Billy snarls, rage and violence radiating off him like red hot coals. "You don't know *shit*. You think a couple hours is enough for you to know me? Huh?"

Soft brown stares at him wide-eyed, distressed. Uneasy. The way he's used to people looking at him.

Good.

He takes one last drag from his crushed cig to blow noxious smoke in the boy's face and shove him back.

Billy grabs a new Marlboro from his pack and flicks the old one out into the dirt, silence falling over them save for Seven's coughs.

There's a bit of shuffling to his right and then a quiet, "I'm sorry... I didn't mean to upset you."

"Don't apologize," he grunts, more threat than reassurance. There's some more fidgeting and he glances over to watch Seven worry at the hem of his shirt, and maybe he looks a bit pathetic, or maybe the blotches of dark rust remind Billy that the kid had just killed a man to escape some hell lab.

Whatever the reason, he begrudgingly decides to give a little, so he tacks on a gruff, "It's fine. Don't worry about it."

Seven nods a little but says nothing.

Billy's onto his fourth smoke by the time he's somewhat cooled down.

"So. What's the plan for the monster shit?"

"...Plan?"

"Yeah, your super secret lab brought the fucker here, they should be the ones to deal with it." Depending how long it takes, he could just keep Max under house arrest. Susan is already shaken by the Byers boy disappearing, if he just scares her into not letting Max outta her sight, it should be pretty easy. "So when are they gonna kill the damn thing."

"Kill?" Stupid pretty boy looks confused again. "They don't know where it is. They can't even find Eleven."

Billy crushes his cigarette. Again.

"You've gotta be fucking kidding me." Incompetent government shits can't clean up their own mess. Who the fuck even let these people near a goddamn test tube. "They're just gonna let this thing run loose and eat kids."

Seven does an actual double take. "Kids have been eaten? Where? How many? Were any of them a little bald girl?"

"No." He doesn't bother to elaborate. "What the hell are you gonna do then?"

"Me?" Doe eyes blink like he wasn't expecting the question and Billy immediately feels his blood pressure rising again. "Oh, I was just gonna sleep in the woods. I want to watch the sunrise through the trees."

Wait—

What.

"It's October. In Hawkins. You're going to freeze to death."

He was talking about the monster shit but what the fuck.

"I'll be okay. Fire hands, remember?" Seven holds them both up and wiggles his fingers as if that proves his point.

"There's a man-eating monster prowling around out there and you want to sleep in the literal most vulnerable place possible."

"That," the brunette stutters to a pause and holy shit *he really didn't even think of that did he*. "Right, so, I'll just. Um...

Oh! Do you think they'll let me sleep at the waffle place?"

The dashboard clock reads 4:37 am.

It's way too fucking late early whatever to deal with this.

Billy just turns the ignition and peels out from dirt roads back onto paved tarmac.

"Are we going back to the waffle place?" Seven asks with way too much enthusiasm.

"No."

"Oh." He fiddles with the air vents, gets a blast of hot air to his face. "Are we going back to Tina's house?"

"No."

The brunette is flipping the sun visor back and forth now. "So where are we going?"

"Keep talking and I'll throw you out the car."

The rest of the drive is blissfully silent.

When they pull up to Old Cherry Road, Billy makes sure to park a bit down the street, just so the Camaro's rumbling doesn't wake anyone up. The driveway is taken by Neil's ugly truck anyway, so it shouldn't look suspicious.

"Listen up, buttercup."

Seven turns away from where he's practically flattened himself against the window, peering out and examining all the houses. The

moonlight shines through the glass and illuminates his face in a way that makes his pale skin seem to glow, contrasting sweetly against round, dark eyes, and Billy has never wanted to beat the shit outta the moon until now.

"You're gonna crash at my place for tonight. But *just* for tonight. Got it?"

Those dumb soft eyes widen and pretty pink lips stretch into a grin. "I get to sleep in your house? For real? Can we have milkshakes for breakfast?"

"No shut up."

Sneaking in an escaped lab experiment covered in blood home is definitely a dumb idea, nevermind that said experiment is *male*, but Billy is fucking *exhausted* and his head hurts and honestly he just wants to get at least two seconds of sleep before he has to drag his corpse to school in a few hours.

So, a slumber party it is.

"No one can know you're here. There's three other people in there sleeping right now and if they see you they'll call the cops. I need you to keep your mouth shut and do exactly what I say. Got that, princess?"

Seven's face is screwed up in confusion but he nods anyway. "Yeah, but, why am I a princess?"

"Cause you're the most distressed damsel I've ever seen," Billy grunts with a completely unimpressed frown. *That's what the moron decided to focus on?* "You gonna be a good boy or not."

Almost like a switch has been flipped, Seven immediately straightens up and gives Billy his undivided attention.

"Yes," the other nods. "I'll be good."

Huh. That was easy.

"Come on. Open the door slowly."

The two make their way silently toward the small bungalow home, footsteps becoming more cautious the closer they get. Once they reach the yard, Billy stops Seven with a hand, takes a few careful steps forward, and gestures for the other to step exactly where he does. Luckily, the boy seems to understand, and they creep around to the side of the house.

Is he so paranoid he doesn't even want to chance snapping a twig? Yes.

Would Neil beat him black and blue if he found out Billy was hiding a boy in his room? Also yes.

Fortunately, they make it to his bedroom window no problem. Slipping his pocket knife out of his jacket, Billy slides the blade into the tiniest opening just above the windowsill, leveraging the gap wide enough for him to grab railing and push it fully open.

It was a little trick no one had caught on to, yet. If he kept the window open by just the *slightest* amount, looking for all intents and purposes fully closed, he could pry it open and slip in without anyone noticing— for those nights Billy said he'd be out late only to wind up coming back hours after he said he would.

Of course, the only reason he's even allowed to *occasionally* stay out is because Hawkins, Indiana is a good Christian hicktown where queers just do not exist.

Can't be a disgusting sinner if there's no one to sodomize your ass.

Billy heaves himself up over the sill and climbs into the dark comfort of his room. Reaching out a hand, he pulls Seven up through the window before quietly sliding it shut. There's a smudge of dirt on the white paint and for some reason he just now notices that the brunette has been barefoot this entire time.

Seven didn't seem to be hurt the way he wandered around the room, so Billy just pushed that issue aside for a time when he's more conscious.

"You're sleeping on the floor," he whispers, toeing off his boots and

stripping out of his clothes. Normally he'd sleep completely naked but.

Billy glances over at Seven who is blinking long and slow, looking so innocent it makes him want to shove the boy face down into the mattress and rail his sweet ass until he's screaming.

So yeah, underwear stays on tonight.

"You don't want to cuddle?" Seven tilts his head, luscious chestnut locks flopping over in a way that is somehow still attractive. Damn kid has probably never had a bad hair day in his life. "I can keep you warm. Any way you want me to."

Billy feels his cock twitch in interest.

One hundred percent the boy is sleeping on the floor.

"No."

He digs around in his closet, finds some extra blankets Susan stuck in everyone's closets because fucking Indiana, and tosses them down in some semblance of a bed. Billy even throws him the better of his two pillows cause he's feeling generous and doesn't wanna hear any bitching about a sore neck.

He fixes Seven with a hard look. "Don't make any sounds, don't touch anything, and for the love of god *do not leave this room*. Understand?"

"Understood," the boy nods.

"Fantastic." Billy drops like lead onto his mattress and burrows himself under the covers. He's gonna fucking hate himself when he wakes up but until then, he thinks he's found heaven laying here like a deflated balloon. "Alarm's gonna go off in a few hours. Gotta leave for school but the parental units have to work so you'll be alone. We'll figure out something when I get back."

"Okay."

He hears Seven settle into his "bed", blankets shuffling around as the boy no doubt tries to get comfortable on the hardwood floor, and

Billy might've felt bad if he wasn't already drifting off into the sweet embrace of sleep.

Just before he slips into unconsciousness, he hears Seven's voice one last time.

"Good night, Billy."

"Night, pretty boy."

Notes for the Chapter:

billy, when blowjobs and running from police: hell yeah

also billy, when given feelings and compliments: get that shit OUT

lmao starting to wonder if i should change the rating to E cause there's been sex in every chapter hmmm
btw have u figured out im just a lame memelord pretending to be a srs writer lol

hope u enjoyed!! \ (*∩▽∩*) /